







# DE L'ORME.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"RICHELIEU," AND "DARNLEY."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## DE L'ORME.

### CHAPTER I.

THE memory of what we have done, without the aid of vanity, would be little better, I believe, than a congregation of regrets. Even in the immediate review of a conversation just passed, how many things do we find which we have forgotten to say, or which might have been said better, or ought not to have been said at all! After Monsieur de Retz was gone, I looked back over the half-hour he had spent with me, and instantly remembered a thousand questions which I ought to have asked him, and a thousand things on which I had better have been silent. I felt very foolish too, on remembering that I had proposed to draw from him all his purposes; and yet, that he had made himself

master of the greater part of my history, while I remained as ignorant of the real object of his visit as if he had never come at all.

My resolution, however, was taken to follow his advice in the matter of going to Sedan. My reasons for so doing—or rather my motives, for reasons, nine times in ten, are out of the question in man's actions—were manifold. I despaired of finding Helen. I was a-weary of that great heap of stones called Paris, where I knew no one; and I had upon me one of those fits of impatience, which would have made me run into the very jaws of destruction to cast off the listlessness of existence.

My eyes had been fixed upon the table while making these reflections; and, on raising them, I found Achilles standing opposite to me, looking in my face with much the air of a dog who sees his master eating his dinner, and standing upon its hind-legs begs for its share too. I could as plainly read in the twinkling little grey eyes of the *ci-devant* player, and the lack-a-daisical expression of his mouth, “Pray let me hear the news?” as if it had been written in large letters on his forehead.

“Achilles!” said I,—willing to gratify him in the most unpleasant way possible,—a thing one often feels inclined to do to another, after having

somewhat severely schooled oneself,—“Achilles, I am going to leave you.”

“I beg your pardon, Monseigneur,” replied he calmly, “but that is quite impossible. You can hardly go any where, where I will not follow you.”

“But listen,” rejoined I; “I am about to set off for Sedan. I ride post; and you can as much ride post as you can—”

“Ride to the Devil,” said Achilles, interrupting me.—“I should not find that very difficult, Monseigneur; but I will ride the Devil himself, sooner than part with you again; so, make your noble mind up to be hunted like a stag from Paris to Sedan, unless you let me ride quietly by your side.”

Though it required no augur's skill to foresee that little Achilles would prove a great incumbrance on the road; yet, as I found him so determined on going, I did not object; and bidding him prepare every thing the next morning to set out as soon as I returned from the Hotel de Retz, I went to bed and slept soundly till the dawn.

At the hour appointed, I proceeded to keep my engagement; and on entering the court of the Hotel de Retz, I found myself suddenly immersed in all the noise and bustle of a great

family's household. It put me in mind of the tales which our old *maître d'hôtel* used to tell of the Chateau de l'Orme, in the days which he remembered; when, as he expressed it, there were always an hundred horses in the stable, and fifty gentlemen in the hall ready to mount at a word of my grandfather's mouth, and there was nothing but jingling of spurs except when there was jingling of glasses; and the glittering of arms in the court-yard was only succeeded by glittering of knives at the table.

I was immediately shown to the apartments of the Abbé de Retz, where I found him surrounded by the servants and gentlemen of his own suite, which was numerous and splendid, in exactly the same proportion as his personal appearance was simple and unostentatious.

On my arrival, he rose and embraced me; and dismissing his attendants, presented me with two letters addressed to the Count de Soissons, which he requested me to deliver—the one from himself, the other from the Duke of Orleans. “I need not bid you be careful of them,” said he, as he gave the two packets into my hands: “each of them contains as much treason as would make the executioner's axe swing merrily.”

This was rather a startling piece of informa-

tion ; and I believe that my face, that unfaithful betrayer of secrets, showed in some degree how much heavier the letters appeared to me after I had heard such news of their contents. " You seem surprised," said De Retz : " but you have lived so far from the Court that you know not what is going on there. I do not suppose that there is one man of rank besides yourself in this great city, who has not qualified himself for the Bastille, or the Place de Grève. Do you not know that every thing with Frenchmen depends upon fashion ? and, let me tell you, that treason is now the fashion ; and that a man that could walk across the court of the Palais Cardinal, with his head steady upon his shoulders, would be looked upon by our *belles dames* as either mean-spirited or under-bred, and scouted from society accordingly."

" I am afraid that I am within the category," replied I, " for I do not know any thing which should make my head tremble there, or in any other place."

" Oh, fear not ! fear not !" answered Monsieur de Retz. " You will find Monsieur le Comte de Soissons surrounded by persons who will speedily put you in the way of as much treason as is necessary to good-breeding. But let them not lead you too far. Our breakfast

is by this time served in my private dining-hall," he added ; " I will send away the servants, and while we satisfy our hunger, I will give you so much insight into the characters of the party assembled at Sedan, as may be necessary to your safety." Thus saying, he led me to a room on the same floor, where we found a small table spread with various delicacies, and covers laid for three.

" Remove that cover," said Monsieur de Retz to one of the servants ; " Monsieur de Lizieux is so much past his time that I am afraid he will not come—and now leave us !" he added ; and then, as soon as the room was clear, " The truth is," said he, " I never expected the good Bishop of Lizieux, but I told the servants to place a cover for him, because he is a great friend of the Cardinal de Richelieu ; and it could not get abroad that I was plotting with a stranger, when it is known that I expected the great enemy of all plots in the person of the worthy prelate." And he smiled while he told me this piece of art, piquing himself more upon such petty cunning than upon all the splendid qualities which his mind really possessed. Yet such perhaps is man's nature, valuing himself upon things that are contemptible, and very often affecting, himself, the same follies he condemns in others.

"I give you nothing but fish, you will perceive," said Monsieur de Retz as we sat down, "this being a meagre day of our Church. Though indeed neither the fasting nor mortification are very great, yet I always keep these fish days. It is a very reputable method of devotion, and gains friends amongst the *pois-sardes*,—no insignificant class."

As we proceeded with our meal, he gave me the sketches he had promised. "Of Monseigneur le Duc de Bouillon," he said, "I shall say nothing, except that, being a great man and sovereign in his town of Sedan, I would advise you to show him all respect and attention; without, however, attaching yourself too strongly to what I may call his party. Near the person of the Count himself, you will find Monsieur de Varicarville, a man of talent and of sense, moderate in his passions, firm in his principles, and devotedly attached to the interest of his lord. A very few days' communication with him will show you that this statement is correct; and in the mean while I will give you a note to him, which will lead him to open himself to you more than he would do to a stranger. Another person you will meet is Monsieur de Bardouville, a man of very good intentions, but with so muddy a brain, that whatever is placed there,

good or bad, sticks so tenaciously that there is no getting it out. He has been converted to a wrong party, and does all in his power to hurry Monsieur le Comte into schemes that would prove his ruin."

"But if his intentions are so good," said I, "were it not worth while to attempt, at least, to bring him over to better opinions by reason?"

"No, no!" answered De Retz. "One makes a very foolish use of reason when one employs it on those who have none. Let him alone, Monsieur de l'Orme. The only man who ever made any thing of his head, was the man that cut it in marble; and then, as Voiture said, he had better have left it alone, as the bust was not a bit softer than the original.—But to proceed: take notice of Campion, one of the chief domestics of Monsieur le Comte. He is a man of great probity and sound judgment,—one that you may confide in. You have now *my opinion* of the principal persons with whom you will be brought in contact, but of course you will form your own;" and drawing in his eyes, he considered me for a moment through the half-closed lids, as if he would have read in my face what impression all he had said had made upon me.

I could not help smiling, for I saw that the facility with which he had drawn my history from me the night before, had given him no very high idea of my intellectual powers, and I replied, still smiling, "Of course, Monsieur de Retz, I *shall* form my own opinion. I always do, of every one I meet with."

He did not well understand the smile; and, never contented unless he read all that was passing in the mind of those with whom he spoke; he opened his eyes full, and with a frank laugh asked me what I thought, then, of himself.

I have often remarked that perfect candour sometimes puts the most wily politician to fault, more than any imitation of his own doublings; and I replied at once,—though I believe there was some degree of pique in my doing so too,—“If you would know frankly what I think of you, Monsieur de Retz, you must hear what I think of your conduct since we first met, for that is all that I can personally judge of.”

“Well, well!” replied he, “speak of that, and I will confess if you are right.”

“In respect to your coming to me last night, then,” replied I, “I think you had some motive of which I am not aware.” A slight flush passed over his face, and then a smile, and he nodded to me to go on. “In regard to the valuable

information you have given me to-day, and for which you have my thanks, I think that the cause of your giving it is something like the following ;—you have some interest in the proceedings of his Highness the Count de Soissons.”

“None but his own, upon my honour,” interrupted De Retz.

“Granted!” replied I. “Of that I do not pretend to judge, but there are evidently two parties about the Prince, one urging him one way, and one another. You, Monsieur de Retz, are attached to one of these parties; and you are very glad of the opportunity of our accidental meeting, to bias me in favour of that side to which you yourself adhere, and to throw me—though a person of very little consequence—into the hands of those with whom you yourself co-operate. I doubt not,” I added, with a smile and a bow, “that your opinion is perfectly correct, and that to your party I shall finally adhere, if his Highness think fit to retain me near his person; but of course it will be the more gratifying to you to find, that I embrace your opinions more from conviction than persuasion.”

I am afraid my politeness had taken somewhat of a triumphant tone, upon the strength of my supposed discernment; and, even before I had done speaking, I was aware of my error, and

felt that I might be making an enemy instead of securing a friend ; but, as I have said, he always contrived to disappoint expectation. For a moment he looked mortified, but his face gradually resumed its good humour ; and he replied with, I believe, real frankness, “ Monsieur de l’Orme, you are right. I own that I have undervalued you, and you make me feel it, for that is what your conversation points at. But you must give me back that letter to Monsieur le Comte, —I must not mislead him in regard to your character.”

I gave him back the letter, saying jestingly, that I should much like to see the reputation which I had acquired on a first interview, and which was doubtless there written down at full.

“Nay, nay!” replied he, tearing it, “that were useless, and perhaps worse ; but you shall see what I now write, if you will, and I will write it frankly.”

He accordingly led the way again to his library, where he wrote a short note to the Count, which he handed to me. After a few lines of the ambiguous language, in which the politicians of that day were wont to envelope their meaning, but which evidently did not at all refer to me, I found the following :—

“ This letter will be delivered to your High-

ness by Count Louis de Bigorre, whom you have expected so long. I met with him by accident, and for a time undervalued him ; but I find, upon farther knowledge, that he can see into other people's secrets better than he can conceal his own. Whether he is capable of discretion on the affairs of his friends, your Highness will judge ; for it does not always follow that a man who gossips of himself will gossip of his neighbours : the same vanity which prompts the one, will often prevent the other."

I do not believe that I should have been able to maintain the same appearance of good humour under Monsieur de Retz's castigation, that he had evinced under mine, had I not observed his eye fix on me as he gave me the paper, and felt certain that while I read, it was scrutinizing every change of my countenance, with the microscopic exactness of a naturalist dissecting a worm. I was upon my guard therefore, and took care that my brow should not exhibit a cloud even as light as the shadow that skims across a summer landscape. "A fair return in kind," replied I, giving him back the letter, with as calm a smile as if I had been looking at the portrait of his mistress. "And as I shall be obliged of necessity to let Monsieur le Comte into *all* my secrets, he will

be able to judge, when he comes to compare notes with you, how much your ingenuity drew from me last night, and how much my poor discretion managed to conceal."

"Excellent good!" cried De Retz, rising and taking me by the hand. "So, you would have me think that you had not told me all, my dear Count; and would thus leave the devil of curiosity and the fiend of mortified vanity to tease me between them during your absence; but you are mistaken. The only use of knowing men's histories is to know their characters, and I have learned more of yours to-day than I did even last night. However, it is time for you to depart. There are the letters," he continued, after having added a few words to that addressed to the Court. "Travel as privately as you can; and fare you well. Before we meet again, we shall know enough of each other from other sources, to spare us the necessity of studying that hard book—the human mind, without a key."

I accordingly took leave of Monsieur de Retz; and in my way home, found out the dwelling of a horse-dealer, for the purpose of buying two nags for Achilles and myself; the necessity of travelling as privately as possible having induced me to change my intention of taking the post.

Though in his whole nature and character

there is not, I believe, an honester animal in the world than a horse, yet there must be something assuredly in a habitual intercourse with him which is very detrimental to honesty in others, for certainly—and I believe in all ages it has been so—there cannot be conceived a race of more arrant cheats and swindlers than the whole set of jockeys, grooms, and horse-dealers. The very first attempt of the man to whom I at present applied, was to sell me an old broken-down hack, with a Roman nose which at once indicated its antiquity, for a fine, vigorous, young horse, as he called it, well capable of the road. The various ingenious tricks had been put in practice of boring his teeth, blistering his pasterns, &c. and his coat shone, as much as fine oil could make it; but still he stood forth with his original sin of old age rank about him, and I begged leave to decline the bargain, though the dealer and the *palfrenier* both shrugged their shoulders at my obstinacy, and declared upon their conscience there was not such another horse in the stable.

After several endeavours to cheat me in the same manner, which they would not abandon, or by habit could not abandon, although they saw I was somewhat knowing in the trade, I fixed upon a strong roan horse for myself, and

a light easy going pad for Achilles. The question now became the price I was to pay, and after the haggling of half an hour, the dealer agreed to take forty louis for the two, which was about five more than their value. He declared, however, so help him God, that he lost by it, and only let me have them in hope of my future custom.

“ I never intend to buy a horse of you again as long as I live,” replied I sharply, “ so do not suffer that hope to bias you.”

“ Well, well, take them,” said he. “ They would soon eat out the money in corn, and so I should lose it any way.”

This matter being settled, I directed them to be brought immediately to my lodging ; making a bargain beforehand for the necessary saddles and bridles, of which the good dealer kept a store at hand ; and then sped on to see that all was prepared for our departure.

It was already past mid-day, but every thing having been made ready during my absence by the activity of my little attendant, as soon as the horses were brought, we loaded them with our bags and our persons, and set out for Sedan. Be it remarked, however, that I still maintained my little lodging in the Rue des Prêtres Saint Paul, as from some words

dropped by the Abbé de Retz, I fancied that I might have occasion to return to Paris on the affairs of Monsieur le Comte.

The ambling jennet which I had bought for Achilles was so much easier than any horse whose back he had ever yet honoured, that the poor little man, after having anticipated the pains of hell, found himself in Elysium; and declared that he could ride to Jerusalem and back without considering it a pilgrimage. I was resolved, however, to put his horsemanship to the proof,—for though I did not seek to call attention to myself, by galloping like an express, in that age when even one's horse's pace was matter of suspicion, yet, as the way was long, I calculated that we might at least reach Jouarre that night.

This we accomplished easily. Stopping but half an hour at Meaux to feed our horses, and then proceeding with all speed, we saw La Ferté not far off, at about an hour before sunset, with its beautiful Abbey standing out clear and rich against the evening sky; and the sweet valley of the Morin winding away in the soft obscurity of the declining light.

Turning out of one of the byroads, a horseman overtook us, and saluting us civilly, joined himself to our party. From the hint

Monsieur de Retz had given me concerning the letter of the Duke of Orleans, I thought it best to avoid all communication with strangers, and therefore gave but very cold encouragement to our new companion's advances. He was a small, keen, resolute-looking little man, and not to be repulsed easily, as I very soon found; for, perceiving that I was not inclined to continue the conversation which he had commenced, he took the whole burthen of it upon himself, and with a peculiar talent for hypotheses, he raised as many conjectures concerning the point to which our journey tended, and our particular object in journeying, as would have found employment for at least a hundred, if they had all been true.

I remembered that Caesar, in some part of his Commentaries, attributes particularly to the Gauls a bad habit of stopping strangers and asking them impertinent questions; and I could not help thinking that the valiant Roman, in some of his adventures, must have met with the ancestors of our new companion. We jogged on however, I maintaining my silence, and Achilles *playing* the stranger, as I have seen a skilful fisherman play a large trout.

When the horseman discovered that our nature was not of a very communicative quality,

he seemed to think that perhaps we required him to open the way, and therefore he told us that he was going to La Ferté to buy grindstones, and that he always lodged at the Auberge of the *Ecu*, which he begged to recommend to us as the best in the town. It was the very best, he said, beyond dispute; we should find good beds, good victuals, and good wine, all at a reasonable rate; and he farther hinted, that, if we desired such a thing, we might have the advantage of his company, to give us an account of the town, and point out to us its beauties and curiosities. Only if we desired it—he said—he was not a man to force his society upon any one!

I replied by a bow, which I intended to be very conclusive; but our new friend was not a man to be satisfied with bows, and therefore he asked straightforward whether I intended to go to the *Ecu*. I replied that it would depend on circumstances. And as we were by this time in the town of La Ferté, no sooner did I see him draw his rein, as if about to proceed to his favourite auberge, than I drew mine the contrary way, and was galloping off, when, to my horror and astonishment, he turned after me, declaring, with a smile of patronizing kindness, that I was so sweet a youth, he could not

think of parting with me, and therefore, as I would not come to his auberge, he would come to mine.

The matter was now beyond endurance. "Sir!" said I, pulling in my rein, and eying him with that cold sort of contemptuous frown which I had generally found a sufficient shield against impertinence, "be so good as to pursue your own way, and allow me to pursue mine; I neither require your society, nor is it agreable to me; and therefore I wish you good morning."

"Ho! Sir, ho!" replied the stranger, "I am not a man to force my society upon any one. But you cannot prevent my going to the same inn with yourself. I read something fortunate in your countenance, and therefore I am sure that no accident will happen to me while I am under the same roof with you. The inn where you sleep will not be burnt down, thieves will not break into it, the rafters will not give way, and the walls fall in. Sir, I am a physiognomist, a chiromancer, and astrologer. I am no necromancer however,—I neither evoke spirits, nor use magic white or black."

"No, no," replied Achilles, grinning till an improper connexion seemed likely to take place between his mouth and his ears—"No,

no, you may be chiromancer and astrologer, but you are no conjurer ; that is clear enough."

" Silence, Achilles," cried I ; " let him pursue his own follies, and follow me on." Thus saying, I rode forward, resolved rather to climb the hill to Jouarre, than expose myself to encounter any more of the babbling old fool's impertinence : but this effort was as vain as the former ; for, determined not to be shaken off, he kept close behind me, till we had reached the beautiful little town of Jouarre, and were safely lodged in the only auberge which it contained.

The moment after I had entered, in he marched into the kitchen ; and, though the landlord treated him as a stranger, yet there was a something—I know not what—which impressed upon my mind that there was some sort of understanding between them. Odd suspicions crossed my imagination, and I resolved to be upon my guard. At the same time, I knew that too great an appearance of reserve might excite suspicion, and consequently I spoke a few quiet words to the landlord, such as a somewhat taciturn traveller might be supposed to exchange with his host on his arrival, and then went with Achilles to see that the horses were properly provided for.

In regard to the stranger, he talked with every one who would talk with him, always taking care, however, to keep me and my fortunate face in sight: and, indeed, he seemed gifted with ubiquity; for no sooner did I leave him in the kitchen, than I met him in the stable; and the next moment I found him again bustling about in the kitchen, ordering his supper with a tone of great authority.

For his part, the landlord, who acted also as cook, and who seemed himself stewed down to nothing from his continual commerce with stew-pans, showed the stranger a thousand times more submissive respect than to any one else, bending his elastic knees with an infinitely lower cringe when the stranger addressed him, than when I did.

As soon as I had supped, we retired to our sleeping-chamber, Achilles having his allotted place in a small truckle-bed, which must have been made for him, it fitted so nicely. Before retiring to rest, however, I took care to secure the letters to the Count de Soissons under my bolster, fastening the door, which had no lock, with what was perhaps better, a large heavy bolt.

I slept soundly till the next morning, but on waking I found my poor little attendant almost speechless with fear. As soon as he could speak, however, he declared that, in the grey of

the morning, he had seen a ghost glide in he knew not how, proceed to the leathern bags which contained our effects, and fumble them for a moment or two in a very mysterious manner. It then glided out, he added, just as I woke, but with so little noise, that it could not have been the cause of dissipating my slumber.

“By Heaven! it was a dangerous undertaking!” cried I in a loud voice, for the benefit of any one within hearing. “Had I chanced to wake, I would have shot it, had it been the best ghost that ever was born.—Examine the bags, Achilles, and see if any thing has been stolen.”

At the same time, I proceeded to ascertain whether the bolt had been rawn back by any contrivance from without, but all appeared as I had left it, and nothing seemed gone from the bags, so that I was obliged to conclude that either Achilles’ imagination had deceived him, or that some one had gained admission into the chamber (by means I could not discover) for some other purpose than simple robbery. After the utmost scrutiny, however, I could not perceive any possible way of entering the room; and dressing myself as quickly as possible, I descended, in order to pay my reckoning and set out immediately.

The landlord stated the sum, and I laid down the money on the table, piece by piece, which he took up in the same manner, bending his head over it till it was close to mine, when suddenly he said in a low whisper, seeming to count the silver all the time, "You are accompanied by a spy. If you want to conceal whither you go, mount and begone with all speed, and take care of your road."

I replied nothing but hurried the preparation of the horses as much as possible; and was in hopes of escaping before my persecutor of the night made his appearance; but just as I had my foot in the stirrup, his visage presented itself at the door, crying with the most indomptible impudence, "Wait for me! wait for me! I will not be a moment."

As may be well supposed, I did not even wait to reply; but putting spurs to my horse, I set off down the hill, begging Achilles to seduce his beast into a gallop, if possible. The little man did his best, and so successful were we in our endeavours, that we soon left Jouarre far behind us; and on turning to look back on the road after half an hour's hard riding, I could see nothing but a blessed void, which gave me more pleasure than any thing I could have beheld.

I slackened not my pace however, but rode on towards Montmirail as fast as possible, thinking over the circumstances which had given rise to my galloping. The Minister, I knew, with the jealous suspicion of usurped power, maintained a complete regiment of spies, scattered all over the kingdom, and invested with every different character and appearance which could disguise their real occupation ; and I doubted not that, according to the landlord's hint at Jouarre, our talkative companion was one of this respectable troop. The character which he assumed was certainly a singular one, but it must be confessed he played it to admiration ; and I congratulated myself not a little on having escaped the pursuit of such a vampire.

## CHAPTER II.

As I wished much to arrive at Chalons that night, we remained no longer at Montmirail than was absolutely necessary to refresh the horses; but before we arrived at Chaintrix, the ambling nag which had borne Achilles began to appear jaded; and, for fear of knocking him up altogether, I determined to halt at that little village for the night, never doubting that we had left our persecutor far behind. What was my surprise then, on descending to the court-yard the next morning, to see the same identical little man, with his brown pourpoint, and his immense funnel-shaped riding-boots, standing in the court ready to mount his horse.

I drew back instantly, hoping he had not seen me, but to see every thing was a part of his profession, and quitting his horse's bridle he ran into the house after me, pulled off his beaver with

the lowest possible bow, giving me the compliments of the morning, and declaring himself the happiest man in the world to have met with me and my fortunate countenance again. "I saw your horse standing in the stable," added he, "and was resolved not to be too late to-day."

His persevering impudence was so ridiculous, that I could not help laughing; and as I saw no way of getting rid of him at the time, I resolved to tolerate him for a while, till I could find some means either of putting him on a wrong scent, or of casting him off more effectually.

"Well then," replied I, "if you are resolved to follow my fortunate face all over the world, you will have to ride fast and far, for I am going to Metz, and am pressed for time."

"Sir," replied the stranger, "I am delighted at the opportunity of riding with you so far. If you had ever been in the East, Sir, you would have no difficulty in divining my motive in accompanying you."

"Without having been in the East," I muttered to myself, "I have no difficulty in divining your motive;" but taking care not to allow him to suppose I entertained any suspicions of him, I begged he would explain how a journey to the East could have enlightened me upon such a subject.

"Why, you must know, Sir," replied he, "that all Oriental nations hold—and I profess myself of their opinion—that good and bad fortune are infectious; and that, by keeping company with a fortunate man, we very often may mend our own luck. Now, Sir, I read in your countenance that you were born under a fortunate star, and therefore I resolved not to leave you till I was certain I had caught something of the same."

"But I hope you are not an unfortunate man," rejoined I, "for if you are, on your own principle, you shall ride no farther with me."

"Oh no," replied the other, "my fortune is neither good nor bad; I am just in that indifferent state, wherein a man is most liable to be affected by the fortune of the company he falls into."

"Then, Lord deliver you!" said I, "for you have fallen in with one whose whole existence hitherto has been nothing but a tissue of mischances; and if I find, as I am afraid I shall, my aunt at Metz has died without making a will, my misfortunes will be complete; for I shall have hardly bread to eat, without his Eminence of Richelieu gives me a place, in recompense of a little service I once rendered him."

I tried hard to make this annunciation in as

natural a tone as art could furnish me with ; and I succeeded in evidently bewildering all the preconceived ideas of the spy, who, while I discharged my reckoning and mounted my horse, which was now ready, stood with his foot in the stirrup, and his face full of incertitude, not knowing whether to believe me or not.

It luckily so happened that Achilles, who stood by, was totally ignorant of what motive induced me to quit Paris ; and I might, for aught he knew, have had as many *aunts* at Metz, as Danaüs had daughters ; so that his countenance was not likely to contradict me.

The spy however, knowing that suspicion is the best rule of action for gentlemen of his cloth under all circumstances, thought he could not do wrong in throwing his other leg over his horse's back, and following me, even at the risk of my having an aunt really dying at Metz. Accordingly, he was instantly by our side, keeping up with admirable perseverance the chattering, inquisitive character he had assumed ; and never ceasing to ask one question or another, till we arrived at St. Ménéhould, where I again stopped for the night.

Wherever we had occasion to pause, even to water our horses, I observed that my new companion was evidently known, though every one

affected to treat him as a stranger. Determined to get rid of him some way, from this confirmation of the suspicions I entertained respecting the honourable capacity he filled, as I was about to retire for the night, I whispered to the host of St. Ménéhould, sufficiently low to pass for a secret, yet sufficiently loud to be heard, to wake me at half-past four the next morning. After this I proceeded to my room, undressed myself, went to bed, and made Achilles extinguish the light, as if I were about to sleep soundly through the night; but I took care to abstain from closing an eye, though the temptation was very great to do so; especially as I was entertained from the bed of my little companion with a sort of music which, however unmelodious, was very soporific.

I had previously ascertained, that at one o'clock in the morning the King's ordinary courier was expected to pass from Verdun; and, consequently, that somebody would sit up in the inn to provide for his accommodation. At midnight, therefore, I rose; and, waking Achilles, bade him dress himself and carry down the bags, all of which we executed with the most marvellous silence, paid the landlord, who was sleeping by the fire, saddled our own horses, and very soon were far upon the road to Verdun, laughing over the surprise which our talkative com-

panion would feel the next morning, when he woke and found us irretrievably gone. Achilles thought it a very good joke, and I a very happy deliverance; and the dawn broke and found us congratulating ourselves still: but what was my horror and surprise, when, turning my head in the grey light of the morning, I saw the brown pourpoint and the funnel-shaped riding-boots, and the strong little horse, and the detestable little man, not a hundred yards behind me, cantering on as composedly as if nothing had occurred to separate him for a moment from my fortunate face, as he called it.

“Ho, ho!” cried he, as he rode up, “I am not a man to force my society upon any one; but I must say, it was a very ungentlemanlike thing to get up in the night, and leave me behind, without so much as giving me warning, or wishing me good evening; and I have ridden all this way, Sir, to tell you so.”

We had already passed Clermont en Argonne, and were in the heart of the wood that stretches round the village of Domballe, and which is generally called the long wood of Domballe. I knew not what might be the consequence of suffering this old man to follow me to Verdun, where it was more than probable he would meet with many persons armed with sufficient autho-

city either to detain us, or to search our persons, should he think fit to instigate such a proceeding; but I was well aware that the life or death, the safety or destruction, of many of the first persons in the realm, depended on my passing free, and therefore I took my determination at once.

Glancing up and down the road, to see that all was clear, I suddenly turned my horse upon him, caught his bridle-rein with one hand, and his collar with the other, and attempted to pull him off his horse. But I soon found that I had to do with one who, though weak in comparison with myself, was nevertheless skilful in the management of his horse, and the use of his arms.

In spite of my efforts, he contrived to bring his horse's head round, to shake off my grasp, and drawing his sword, to stand upon the defensive in so masterly a manner, that the farther attack became a matter of no small difficulty.

I was now however too far committed to recede; but while I considered the best means of mastering without injuring him, he seemed to think I was daunted, and cried out, in a jeering tone, "Ho, ho! your fortunate face is likely to get scratched, if you come near me. Better

ride on to see your aunt at Metz; or back to Paris, and persuade the Cardinal to give you a place. See that it be not in the Bastille, though."

"Ride in, Achilles, on your side," cried I, "while I ride in on mine. Quick, we have no time to lose!"

"No sooner however did the old spy hear this order, and see it likely to be executed, than turning his horse back towards Clermont, he gave him full rein, and spurred off at all speed. This did not very well answer my purpose, and dashing my spurs into my beast's sides, I made him spring on like a deer, overtook the fugitive before he had gone twenty yards, and once more catching his collar, brought him fairly to the ground. It was no longer difficult to master his sword, and this being done, he begged most pitifully for mercy.

"Mercy you shall have," replied I, "but, by Heaven! I will no longer be teased with such detestable persecution. 'Tis insupportable, that a peaceable man cannot ride along the high-road on his own affairs, without having a chattering old dotard sticking to him like a horse-leech!"

Achilles had by this time ridden up, and taking some strong cord which he happened to

have with him, I pinioned the arms of my indefatigable pursuer ; and, leading him a little way into the wood, I tied him tight to a tree, near a pile of faggots, which showed that the spot was so far frequented, that he would not be left many hours in such an unpleasant situation. My only object was to get rid of him ; and, this being effected, I again mounted my horse and pursued my journey to Verdun, though, as I went, I could not help every now and then turning my head and looking down the road. not a little apprehensive of seeing the brown pourpoint, and funnel-shaped boots pursuing me once more.

I arrived however unannoyed, and notwithstanding the prayers and entreaties of Achilles, that I would but stay a quarter of an hour to satisfy the cravings of an empty stomach, I instantly haled one of the flat boats that lie below the bridge. The little man judging of my intentions, spurred his horse as quick as light up to a *traiteur's* on the opposite side of the way ; and, before I had concluded a bargain with the boatman to take us and our two horses to Sedan, he had returned with an immense roasted capon and half a yard of bread.

Once in the boat, and drifting down the Meuse, I felt myself in safety ; and a full cur-

rent and favourable wind bore us rapidly to Sedan.

It was night however before we arrived, and we found the gates closed and drawbridge raised ; and all the most rigorous precautions taken to prevent the entrance of any unknown person into the town during the night.

“ If you will disembark, Sir,” said the boatman, “ and go round to the land-gate, they will soon let you in ; for there are parties of fifty and sixty arriving every day ; and Sedan will be too small to hold them before long. However, they refuse no one admittance, for they say the Count will soon take the field.”

“ Take the field !” said I, “ and what for, pray ?”

“ Ah, that I don't know,” answered the boatman ; “ folks say, it is to dethrone the Cardinal, and make the King prime-minister.”

Whether this was a jest or a blunder, I did not well know ; but bidding the man put me on shore, I led out my roan, and mounting on the bank, rode round to a little hamlet which had gathered on each side of the road, at about a hundred yards from the Luxembourg Gate. As I was going to enquire at one of the houses, I saw a sentinel thrown out as far as the foot of the glacis, and riding up to him, I asked if

admission was to be procured that night. He replied in the affirmative, and proceeding to the gate I was soon permitted to enter, but immediately my bridle was seized on each side by a pikeman; and the same being performed upon Achilles, we were led on to a small guardhouse, where we found a sleepy officer of the watch, who asked with a true official drawl, "Whom seek you in the good town of Sedan, and what is your business here?"

"I seek his Highness the Count de Soissons," replied I, "and my business with him is to speak on subjects that concern himself alone."

"Your name and rank?" demanded the officer.

"Louis de Bigorre, Count de l'Orme," replied I; "and this is my servant, Achilles Lefranc."

"We shall soon have need of Achilles," said the officer, grinning. "I wish, Monsieur le Comte, that you had brought a score or two such, though he seems but a little one.—Mouchard, guide these two gentlemen up to the Castle. There is a pass."

There is almost always something sad and gloomy in the aspect of a strange town at night. We seem in a dark, melancholy world,

where every step is amongst unknown objects, all wrapped up in a cold repulsive obscurity ; and I felt like one of the spirits of the unburied on the hopeless borders of Styx, as I walked on amidst the tall, dark houses of Sedan, which, as far as any interest that I had in them, were but so many ant-hills. Lighted by a torch that the soldier who guided us carried, and followed, as I soon perceived, by two other guards, we were conducted to the higher part of the town, where the citadel is situated ; and there, after innumerable signs and countersigns, I was at last admitted within the walls, but not suffered to proceed a step in advance, till such time as my name had been sent in to the principal officer on guard.

I was thus detained half an hour, at the end of which time a page splendidly dressed appeared, and conducted me to the interior of the building, with a display of reverence and politeness which augured well as to my farther reception. Achilles followed along the turnings and windings of the citadel, till we came to a chamber, through the open door of which a broad light streamed out upon the night, while a hundred gay voices chattered within, mingled with the ringing, careless laugh of men who, cutting off from themselves the regrets of the past

and the fears of the future, live wise and happy in the existence of the day.

“ If you will do me the honour, Sir,” said the page, turning to my little attendant, “ to walk into that room, you will find plenty of persons who will make you welcome to Sedan, while I conduct your master to another chamber.”

Achilles bowed to the ground, and answered the page in a speech compounded suddenly from twenty or thirty tragedies and comedies; and though, to confess the truth, it hung together with much the same sort of uniformity as a beggar's coat, yet the attendant seemed not only satisfied but astonished, and made me, as master of such a learned Theban, a lower reverence than ever, while he begged me to follow him.

Meet it as one will, there is always a degree of anxiety attached to the first encounter with a person on whom our fate in any degree depends, and I caught my heart beating even as I walked forward towards the apartments of the Count de Soissons. We mounted a flight of steps, and at the top entered an antichamber, where several inferior attendants were sitting, amusing themselves at various games. In the room beyond, too, the same sort of occupation seemed fully as much in vogue, for, of twenty gentlemen that it contained, only two were en-

gaged in conversation with some written papers between them, while all the rest were rolling the dice or dealing the cards, with most industrious application. Several, however, suffered their attention to be called off from the mighty interests of their game, and raising their heads gazed at me for a moment as I passed through the room; and then addressed themselves to their cards again, with a laugh or an observation on the new-comer, which, with the irritable susceptibility of youth, I felt very well inclined to resent, if I could have found any specious plea for offence.

The page still advanced; and, throwing open a door on the other side of the room, led me through another small antichamber, only tenanted by a youth who was nodding over a book, to a door beyond, which he opened for me to pass, and left me to go in alone.

The room which I entered was a large, lofty saloon hung with rich tapestry, and furnished with antique chairs and tables, the dark hues of which, together with the sombre aspect of the carved oak plafond, gave a gloomy air of other days to the whole scene, so that I could have fancied myself carried back to the reign of Francis the First. A large lamp, containing several lights, hung by a chain from the ceiling,

and immediately under this, leaning back in a capacious easy chair, sat a gentleman with a book in his hand, which he was reading and evidently enjoying, for at the moment we entered he was laughing till the tears rolled over his cheeks. As soon as he heard a step, however, he laid down his book, and turned towards the door, struggling to compose his countenance into some degree of gravity. As I advanced, he rose and addressed me with that frank and pleasing affability which is the best and surest key to the human heart.

“Count Louis de Bigorre, I believe,” he said, “you catch me in an occupation which the proverb attributes to fools—laughing by myself; but with such a companion as Sancho Panza, one may be excused, though the same jest has made my eyes water an hundred times. However, be you most welcome, for you have been a long-expected guest at Sedan. Yet now you are arrived,” he added, “however great the pleasure may be to me, perhaps it would have been better for yourself had you remained absent.”

I replied, as a matter of course, that I could not conceive any thing better for myself, than the honour of being attached to the Count de Soissons.

“Heaven only knows,” said he, “what may

be the event to you or me ! But sit down, and tell me, when you left Paris—whom you saw there,—and what news was stirring in that great capital ?”

“ I have been four days on the road,” replied I, bringing forward one of the smaller chairs, so as to be sufficiently near the Prince to permit the conversation to flow easily, without approaching to any degree of familiar proximity. “ Perhaps,” I continued, “ as I rode my own horses, I might not have had the honour of seeing your Highness till to-morrow, had I not found it necessary to hurry forward to avoid a disagreeable companion.”

“ How so ?” demanded the Count. “ I hope no attempt was made to impede your progress hither ; for if that has been the case, it is time that I should look to my communications with my other friends in France.”

I gave the Count a somewhat detailed account of my adventures on the road, that he might judge what measures were necessary to ensure the secrecy of his correspondence with Paris.

“ So,” cried he laughing, “ you have met with an old friend of ours here, Jean le Hableur, as he is called. He is one of the Cardinal’s most daring and indefatigable spies ; and few are there who have had address and courage

enough to baffle him as you have done. He traced my poor friend Armand de Paul to the very gates of Sedan, found out that he was carrying dispatches to me, filched a letter from his person containing much that should have remained secret, and, having made himself acquainted with his name, laid such information against him, that Armand, at his return to Paris, was instantly arrested and thrown into the Bastille. Why, the whole country between Verdun and Paris is so famous, or rather infamous, from his continual presence, that no one here dare pass by that road for fear of meeting with *Jean le Hableur*. You should have gone by Mezieres : but where are these letters you speak of ?”

I instantly produced them, and gave them into the hands of the Count, who read the letter from the Duke of Orleans with a sort of smile that implied more scorn than pleasure. He then laid it down, saying aloud, with rather a bitter emphasis, “My good cousin of Orleans !” He then perused the epistle of Monsieur de Retz, and from time to time as he did so turned his eyes upon me, as if comparing the character which he therein found written down, with those ideas which he had already begun to form of me himself, from that outward semblance that almost always finds means to prejudice

even the wisest and most cautious. When he had concluded, he rose and walked once or twice across the saloon, thoughtfully running his hand up and down the broad, rich swordbelt which hung across his breast, which I afterwards found was habitual with him, when any consideration occupied him deeply.

"I had risen when he rose, but still stood near the table, without however turning my eyes towards it; for the letter of the Duke of Orleans laying open upon it, I did not choose to be suspected of even wishing to know its contents.

"Sit, sit, Count Louis!" said the Prince, resuming his seat, and then adding in a serious tone, but one of great kindness, "Monsieur de Retz, I find, has not made you aware of all the circumstances of my present situation; and perhaps has done wisely to leave that communication to myself. From the great friendship and esteem—I may say affection, with which my mother regards yours, I had not a moment's hesitation in saying, that if you would join me here, you should have the very first vacant post in my household, suitable to your own high rank, and the antiquity of your family. Since then, the place of first gentleman of my bed-chamber is void, and I have reserved it for you; but, as that is a situation which brings you so

near my own person, an unlimited degree of confidence is necessary between us. Your rank, your family, the high name of your father and grandfather, the admirable character which my mother attributes to yours, all seem to vouch that you are—that you must be every thing noble and estimable: but still there are two or three circumstances which you must explain to me, before I can feel justified in trusting you with that entire confidence I speak of. Monsieur de Retz says, you have given him your history, which is a strange one—though how that can be, I do not know, for you are but a young man, and can have, I should imagine, but little to tell. He says farther, that he met with you by accident, and seems to hint that, when he did so, you had not intended to join me here, as my mother informed me you would. He insinuates also, that you were somewhat indiscreet towards him, in speaking of your own affairs. Explain all this to me, for there is something evidently to be told. Make me your confidant without reserve, and, in return, I will confide to you secrets perhaps of greater importance. If you have nothing to tell but youthful errors, or imprudence, speak without fear, as you would to a friend and brother; but,” he added more gravely, “if there is any thing which

affects your honour—which I may say I am sure there is not,—I ask no confidence of the kind.”

“Had your Highness not required it,” replied I, “I should not have presumed to intrude my private affairs upon your attention ; but now that I find you, most justly, think it right to assure yourself of the character of one to whom you design the honour of being near your person, I may be permitted to express what happiness and consolation I feel, in being allowed to repose all my griefs and misfortunes in the bosom of a Prince universally beloved and esteemed.” When I spoke thus, I did not flatter ; and I concluded by giving as brief a sketch, but as accurate a one as possible, of all the events which fill the foregoing pages of these memoirs. “I will own, my Lord,” I added, “that I told a part of this story to Monsieur de Retz, but only a small part ; and that was in a moment of joy, when, after having lived lonely and miserable in a large city, for upwards of a month, I suddenly found that I was expected, and would be welcomed by a prince possessed of a treasure which few princes, I am afraid, can boast—a generous and a feeling heart. I was perhaps indiscreet in communicating even a part to any one but your Highness ; but you will not find that, in your service, I will be either indiscreet or unfaithful.”

“I believe you,” said the Count, “on my honour, I believe you ; and De Retz was too hasty in even calling you indiscreet ; for your conduct towards our friend Jean le Hableur, proves sufficiently that you can keep counsel. Your history has interested me more than I will tell you at present. I feel for all you have suffered, and I would not for the world barter that power of feeling for others, against the most tranquil stoicism. Sympathy however, though always agreeable to him that excites it, is little pleasing to him who feels it, without he can follow it up by some service to the person by whom it has been awakened. I will try whether that cannot be the case with you ;—but you are tired with your long journey ; and the night wears. Ho, without there ! send Monsieur de Varicarville hither. We will talk more to-morrow, Monsieur de l’Orme, since such is the name you choose.”

I rose to depart, but at the same time one of the gentlemen whom I had seen in the outer chamber, conversing while the rest were gaming, entered, and the Count introduced me to him, begging him to show me all kindness and attention, as a person whom he himself esteemed and loved.

## CHAPTER III.

THE manners of Monsieur de Varicarville were at once simple and elegant, there was none of the superfluous hyperbole of courts; there was little even of the common exaggeration of society, in any thing he said. He neither expressed himself *ravished* to make my acquaintance, nor *delighted* to see me; all he said was, that he would do every thing that depended upon him, to make me comfortable during my stay at Sedan. And thus I always found him afterwards,—neither what is in general called blunt, which is more frequently rude, nor what is usually called polite, which is in general hollow. He had too much kindness of heart ever to offend, and too much sincerity ever to flatter. But the goodness of his disposition, and the native grace of his demeanour gave, conjoined, that real *bienséance*, of which courtly politeness

is but an unsubstantial shadow. Poor Varicarville! I owe thee such a tribute. Best and most excellent of friends! and though no epitaph hangs upon the tomb where thou sleepest, in the hearts of all who knew thee, thy memory is treasured and beloved.

After a few words of kindness, and having received the note addressed to him, from the Abbé de Retz, he gave me into the hands of the Count's *maître d'hôtel*, telling him that I was the gentleman who had been so long expected; and desiring him to see that I wanted nothing, till such time as I was sufficiently familiarized with the place and its customs, to take care of myself. He then left me, and I was conducted to a neat chamber with an anti-room, containing three truckle beds for lackeys, a small writing or dressing cabinet, and several other conveniences, which I had hardly expected in a castle so completely full as the citadel of Sedan appeared to be. Before the *maître d'hôtel* left me, I requested that my horses might be taken care of, and that my servant might be sent to me, hinting at the same time that, if he brought me a cup of wine and something to eat, I should not at all object, as I had tasted nothing all day except a wing of the capon which Achilles had carried off from Verdun. My

little attendant soon appeared, loaded with a great many more provisions than I needed, and congratulating both himself and me upon our sudden transposition from Paris, and the meagre diet we had there observed, to such a land of corn, wine, and oil.

While I was undressing, some thoughts would fain have intruded, which I was very sure would have broken up my rest for the night. The agitation of being in new, strange scenes, acting with people of whom I yet knew hardly any thing, and involved in schemes which at best were hazardous, was quite enough to make sleep difficult, and I felt very certain that, if I let my mind rest one moment on the thought of Helen, and of the circumstances in which she might at that moment be placed, all hope of repose—mental repose, at least, was gone; and where is any exercise so exhausting to the body, as that anxious occupation of the mind? The next morning I was hardly awake, when Monsieur de Varicarville entered my chamber, and informed me that Monsieur le Comte wished to see me; and dressing myself as fast as possible, I hurried to the Prince's apartments, where I found him still in bed. Varicarville left us, and the Count made me sit down by his bedside.

"I have been thinking, De l'Orme," said he, "over the history you gave me last night, and I again assure you that I sympathize not a little with you. I am much older than you, and the first hasty torrent of passion has passed away at my time of life; but I can still feel, and know, that love such as you profess towards this young lady, whom your mother has educated, is not a passion easily to be rooted out. Nor is the death of her brother by your hand an insurmountable obstacle. She evidently does not know it herself; and it would be a cruel piece of delicacy in you either to let her know it, or to sacrifice both her happiness and your own for such a scruple."

The picture of Helen in the arms of her brother's murderer, and the horror she would feel at his every carcase, if she did but know that he was so, rose up frightfully before my imagination, as the Count spoke, and without replying, I covered my eyes with my hands as if to shut the image out.

"This is an age, Monsieur de l'Orme," said the Count, "in which few people would suffer, as you seem to do, for having shed their fellow-creature's blood; and yet, I would not have you feel less. Feel, if you will, but still govern your feelings. Every one in this world has

much to suffer ; the point of wisdom is to suffer well. But think over what I have said. Time may soon bring about a change in the face of affairs. If fortune smiles upon me, I shall soon have the power of doing greater things than obtaining letters of nobility for your fair lady's father. Thus the only substantial objection to your marriage will be removed. From what you said of the house where you last saw her, and the liveries of the servants, it must have been the hotel of the Maréchal de Chatillon ; and the youth whose conversation you overheard was probably his nephew ; but fear not for that. He is a hairbrained youth, little capable of winning the heart of a person such as you describe. The only thing that surprises me is, that Arnault, her father, should have acquired any degree of intimacy with so proud a man as Chatillon ; but that very circumstance will be some excuse for asking nobility for him, and the favour will come with the more grace, as Chatillon is somewhat a personal enemy of my own."

I thanked the Prince for his kind intentions, though I saw no great likelihood of their fulfilment, and fancied that, like the cottager in the fairy tale, Monsieur le Comte imagined himself a great conqueror, and gave away

crowns and sceptres, though he had not two roods of land himself. But I was mistaken : the Count's expectations were much more likely to be accomplished than I had supposed, as I soon perceived, when he began to explain to me his views and situation.

When a man's mind is in doubt upon any subject, and he has heard reiterated, a thousand times, the various reasonings of his friends, without being able to choose his part determinately, it is wonderful with what eagerness he seeks for any new opinion to put him out of suspense—the most painful situation in which the human mind can remain. Thus the Count de Soissons, after having entertained me shortly with my own affairs, entered full career upon his ; and briefly touching upon the causes which originally compelled him to quit the Court of France, and retire to Sedan, he proceeded :

“Here I would willingly have remained quiet and tranquil, till the course of time brought some change. I neither sought to return to a Court where the King was no longer sovereign, nor to cabal against the power of a minister, upheld by the weakness of the monarch. All I required was to be left at peace in this asylum, where I could be free from the insult and degradation which had been offered me at

the Court of France. I felt that I was sufficiently upholding the rights and privileges which had been transmitted to me by my ancestors, and maintaining the general cause of the nobility of France, by submitting to a voluntary exile, rather than yield to the ambitious pretensions of a misproud Minister; and nothing would have induced me to raise the standard of civil war, even though the King's own good was to be obtained thereby, if Richelieu had but been content to abstain from persecuting me in my retirement. Not the persuasions of the Dukes of Vendome and La Valette, nor the entreaties of my best friend the Duke de Bouillon, nor the promises and seductions of the House of Austria, would have had any effect, had I been left at peace: but no! never for a day has the Cardinal ceased to use every measure in his power to drive me to revolt. The truth is this; he calculates upon the death of my cousin Louis, and upon seizing on the Regency during the Dauphin's minority. He knows that there is no one who could and would oppose him but myself. The Duke of Orleans is hated and despised throughout France—the House of Condé is bound to the Cardinal by alliance. He knows that he could not for a moment stand against me, without the King's

support and authority; and he has resolved to ruin me while that support still lasts. For this purpose, he at one time offers me the command of one of the armies, that I may return and fall into his power; he at another threatens to treat me as a rebel and a traitor. He now proposes to *me*, a prince of the blood royal of France, a marriage with his upstart niece; and then menaces me with confiscation and attainder; while at the same time my friends on every side press me to shake off what they call apathy,—to give my banner to the wind, and marching upon Paris, to deliver the country, the King, and myself, of this nightmare Cardinal, who sits a foul incubus upon the bosom of the state, and troubles its repose with black and frightful dreams.”

As he went on, I could see that Monsieur le Comte worked himself up with his own words to no small pitch of wrath; calling to mind, one by one, the insults and injuries that the Cardinal had heaped upon him, till all his slumbering anger woke up at once, and with a flashing eye, he added, “And so I will. By Heaven! I will hurl him from his usurped seat, and put an end to this tyranny, which has lasted too long.” But very soon after, relapsing again into his irresolution, he asked, “What think you, Monsieur de

l'Orme? Should I not be justified? Am I not called upon so to do?"

"I would pray your Highness," replied I, "not to make me a judge in so difficult a point; I am too young and inexperienced to offer an opinion where such great interests are concerned."

"Fie, fie!" cried he, with a smile, "you, who have already acted the conspicuous part of member of the insurrectionary council of Catalonia! We are all inexperienced, in comparison with you.—Tell me, what had I better do?"

"If I must give an opinion, Monseigneur," I replied, "I think you had better endure as long as you can, so as to leave no doubt in your own eyes,—in those of France—in those of the world,—that you are compelled to draw the sword for the defence of your own honour, and for the freedom of your country. But once having drawn the sword, cast away the scabbard."

"Then, I am afraid the sword is half drawn, already," said the Count. "There are eight thousand armed men in Sedan. Fresh troops are pouring in upon me every day. The news has gone abroad that I am about to take the field; and volunteers are flocking from every quarter to my standard. Yesterday, I had letters from at least sixty different parts of France, assuring me that, one battle gained, but to confirm the

fearful minds of the populace ; and that scarce a province will refrain from taking arms in my cause. De Retz is in hopes even of securing the Bastille ; and he has already, with that fine art which you have remarked in him, bound to my cause thousands of those persons in the capital, who, in popular tumults, guide and govern the multitude. I mean the higher class of paupers, the well-educated, the well-dressed, sometimes even the well-born ; who are paupers the more, because they have more wants than the ostensible beggar ; these De Retz has found out in thousands, has visited them in private, relieved their wants, soothed their pride, familiarized himself with their habits and wishes, and, in short, has raised up a party for me, which almost insures me the capital."

This last part of the Count's speech instantly let me into the secret of Monsieur de Retz's first visit to me. My good landlady's tongue had probably not been idle concerning what she conceived my necessitous situation ; and, upon the alert for all such cases of what Monsieur le Comte called higher pauperism De Retz had lost no time in seeking to gain me, as he had probably gained many others, by a display of well-timed and discriminating charity.

God knows, I was not a man to look upon

wealth and splendour as a virtue in others, nor to regard misfortune and poverty as a vice; and yet, with one of those contradictory weaknesses with which human nature swarms, I felt inexpressibly hurt and mortified at having been taken for a beggar myself.

Monsieur le Comte saw a sudden flush mount up into my cheek, and judging from his own great and noble heart, he mistook the cause. "I see what you think, Monsieur de l'Orme," said he, "you judge it mean to work with such tools; but you are wrong. In such an enterprise as this, it is my duty to my country to use every means, to employ all measures, to ensure that great and decisive preponderance, which will bring about success, without any long protracted and sanguinary struggle."

I assured him that I agreed with him perfectly, and that I entertained no such thoughts as he suspected. "So far from it," replied I, "that if your Highness will point out to me any service I can render you, be it of the same kind you have just mentioned, or not, you will find me ready to obey you therein, with as much zeal as Monsieur de Retz."

"There is a candour about you, my good De l'Orme," replied the Count, "which I could not doubt for a moment, if I would: but what

would all my sage counsellors say—the suspicious Bouillon, the obdurate Bardouville,—if I were to entrust missions of such importance to one of whom I know so little?—one who, they might say, was only instigated to seek me by a temporary neglect of Richelieu, and who would easily be led to join the other party, by favour and preferment?”

“I am not one to commit such treachery, my Lord,” replied I, hastily. “I am ready to swear before God, upon his holy altar, neither to abandon nor betray your Highness.”

“Nay, nay,” said the Count de Soissons, smiling at my heat, “swear not, my dear Count! Unhappily, in our days, the atmosphere which surrounds that holy altar you speak of, is so thick with perjuries, that an honest man can hardly breathe therein. I doubt you not, De l’Orme; your word is as good to me as if you swore a thousand oaths; and I am much inclined to give you a commission of some importance, both because I know I can rely upon your wit and your honour, and because your person is not so well known in Paris as the other gentlemen of my household. But to return to what we were saying; still give me your opinion about drawing the sword, as you have termed it; ought I, or ought I not?”

"By my faith, your Highness," replied I, "I think it is drawn already, as you yourself have admitted."

"Not so decidedly," answered the Count, "but that it can be sheathed again; and if this Cardinal, alarmed at these preparations, as I know he is, will but yield such terms of compromise as may insure my own safety and that of my companions, permit the thousands of exiles who are longing for their native country to return, and secure the freedom and the peace of France, far, far be it from me ever to shed one drop of Gallic blood!"

"But does not your Highness still continue your preparations then?" demanded I.

"Most assuredly!" replied the Count. "The matter must come to a conclusion speedily, either by a negotiation and treaty, which will insure us our demands, or by force of arms: and therefore, it is well to be prepared for the latter, though most willing to embrace the former alternative."

"And does the Minister seem inclined to treat?" asked I.

"He always pretends that he is so," replied Monsieur de Soissons. "But who can judge of what his inclinations are by what he says? his whole life is a vizard,—as hollow—as

false,—as unlike the real face of the man. We all know how negotiations can be protracted; and he has used every means to keep this in suspense till he could free himself from other embarrassments. He asked our demands, and then misunderstood them; and then required a fuller interpretation of particular parts; and then mistook the explanation—then let a month or two slip by; and then again required to know our demands, as if he had never heard them: and then began over again the same endless train of irritating delay. But however, there is one of our demands which we will never relinquish, and which he will never grant, except he be compelled, which is the solemn condemnation and relinquishment of all special commissions.”

“I am not very well aware of the meaning of that term,” said I: “may I crave your Highness to explain it to me?”

“I do not wonder at your not knowing it,” answered the Count: “it is an iniquity of his own invention, totally unknown to the laws of France. When any one was accused of a crime formerly, the established authorities of the part of the country in which it was averred to have been committed, took cognizance of the matter, and the accused was tried before the usual judges; but now, on the contrary, on any such

accusation, this Cardinal issues his special commission to various judges named by himself, uniformly his most devoted creatures, and often the personal enemies of the accused. Under such an abuse, who can escape? False accusers can always be procured; and where the judges are baser still, justice is out of the question. The law of France is no longer administered, but the personal resentments of Richelieu."

The conversation continued for some time in the same course, and turned but little to the advantage of the Minister. The Count de Soissons had real and serious cause of indignation against Richelieu, on his own account; and this made him see all the public crimes of that great but cruel and vindictive Minister, in the most unfavourable light. The stimulus of neglect had in my mind, also, excited feelings which made me lend an attentive ear to the grievances and wrongs that the Prince was not slow in urging, and my blood rose warmly against the tyranny which had driven so many of the great and noble from their country, and spilt the most generous blood in France upon the scaffold.

I have through life seen self-interest and private pique bias the judgment of the wisest and the best intentioned; and I never yet in all the wide world met with a man who, in

judging of circumstances wherein he himself was any way involved, did not suffer himself to be prejudiced by one personal feeling or another. The most despotic lords of their own passions have always some favourite that governs them themselves. Far be it from me, then, to say, I was not very willing and easy to be convinced that the man who had neglected me had also abused his power, tyrannized over his fellow-subjects, and wronged both his King and his country. I was in the heat of youth, soon prepossessed, and already prejudiced; and whatever I might think afterwards, I, at the moment, looked upon the enterprise which was contemplated by Monsieur le Comte, as one of the most noble and justifiable that had ever been undertaken to free one's native country from a tyrant.

There was also in the manners of the Count de Soissons that inexpressible charm which leaves the judgment hardly free. It is impossible to say exactly in what it consisted. I have seen many men with the same princely air and demeanour, and with the same suavity of manner, who did not in the least possess that sort of fascination which, like the cestus of the goddess, won all hearts for him that was endowed with it. I was not the only one that felt the charm. Every body that surrounded the

Prince,—every body that, in any degree, came in contact with him, were all affected alike towards him. Even the common multitude experienced the same ; and the shouts with which the populace of Paris greeted his appearance on some day of ceremony, are said to have been the first cause of the Cardinal's jealous persecution of him. One saw a fine and noble spirit, a generous and feeling heart shining through manners that were at once dignified while they were affable, and warm though polished ; and it might be the conviction of his internal rectitude, and his perfect sincerity, which added the master-spell to a demeanour eminently graceful. Whatever it was, the fascination on my mind was complete ; and I hardly know what I would have refused to undertake in the service of such a Prince. At the end of our conversation, scarcely knowing that I did so, I could not help comparing in my own mind my present interview with the Count de Soissons, and that which I had formerly had with the Cardinal de Richelieu ; and how strange was the difference of my feelings at the end of each ! I left the Minister, cold, dissatisfied, dispirited ; and I quitted the Count de Soissons, with every hope and every wish ardent in his favour ; with all my best feelings devoted to his service, and my own

expectations of the future raised and expanded by my communion with him, like a flower blown fully out by the influence of a genial day of summer.

On leaving the Count's apartments, I passed through a room in which I found Monsieur de Varicarville with several other gentlemen, to whom he introduced me; and we then proceeded to the grand hall of the chateau, where we were met by the personal suite of the Duke of Bouillon, who divided the interior of the citadel equally with his princely guest. The Duke had this morning made some twinges of the gout an excuse for taking his breakfast with the Duchess in his own apartment, and the Count did so habitually; but for the rest of the party, two long tables were spread, each containing fifty covers, which were not long in finding employers. The table soon groaned with the breakfast, and every one drew his knife and fell to, with the more speed, as it had been announced that the tilt-yard of the castle would be open at eight of the clock, to such as chose to run at the ring. After which there would be a *course des têtes*. Neither of these exercises I had ever seen, and consequently was not a little eager for the conclusion of the meal, although I could but hope to be a spectator.

## CHAPTER IV.

IMMEDIATELY after breakfast, I returned to the apartments of the Count de Soissons, to attend him with the rest of his suite to the tilt-yard; and in a few minutes after was called to his chamber by his valet. I found him already dressed, and prepared to take his share in the sports. He was fitting himself with a right-hand glove of strong buff-leather, which covered his arm to the elbow, and in regard to the exact proportions of which, he seemed as curious as a young lordling of a new pourpoint.

“What, De l'Orme,” cried he, “not gloved ! You can never hold your lance without such a supplementary skin as this. Choose one from this heap ; and see that the flap fall clear over the inner part of your fore-arm.”

I endeavoured to excuse myself, by informing his Highness that I was quite unused to such

exercises; but he would not hear of my being merely a spectator, and replied laughing,—  
“Nonsense, nonsense! I must see how you ride, and how you use your sword, to know whether I can give you a regiment of cavalry with safety. Ho, Gouvion! order Monsieur de l'Orme's horse to be saddled instantly!”

There was of course no way of opposing the Count's command; and though I was very much afraid that I should do myself no great credit, I was obliged to submit, and accompanied Monsieur le Comte to the little court at the foot of the staircase, with somewhat nervous feelings at the idea of exhibiting myself before two or three hundred people, in exercises which I had never even seen. I had quite sufficient vanity to be timid, where failure implied the slightest touch of ridicule.

The tilt-yard consisted of a large piece of level ground, within the walls, of perhaps a couple of acres in extent, the centre of which was inclosed with barriers surrounding an oblong space of about two hundred feet in length by fifty in breadth.

The distance was so small from the court before the Count's apartments to the barriers, that he had sent on the horses, and walked thither followed by myself and about a dozen

other gentlemen of his suite. As we approached, the people who had assembled to witness the exercises, and amongst whom were a number of soldiers, received the Count with a shout sufficiently indicative of his popularity, and separating respectfully as he advanced, permitted him to meet a small knot of the more distinguished exiles, who had flocked to his standard at the first report of his having determined to take arms against the Cardinal.

The Count proceeded onward, bowing to the people in recognition of their welcome, with that bland smile which sits so gracefully on the lips of the great; and then advancing with somewhat of a quicker step, as he perceived the group of nobles I have mentioned hurrying to meet him, he spoke to them all, but selected two for more particular attention. The first was a man of about fifty; and, after I had heard him named as the Duke of Vendome, I fancied I could discover in his face a strong likeness to the busts of Henry Quatre. The second was the Duke of Bouillon; and certainly never did I behold a countenance which, without being at all handsome, possessed so pre-eminently intellectual an expression. To me it was not pleasing, nor was it what is called shrewd—nay, nor thoughtful; and yet it was all mind

—mind quick to perceive, and strong to repel, and steady to retain, and bold to uphold. The whole was more impressive than agreeable, and gave the idea of all the impulses springing from the brain, and none arising in the heart.

After he had returned the embrace of the Count de Soissons, his quick dark eye instantly glanced to me with an enquiring look.

The Prince saw and interpreted his glance ; and making me a sign to advance, he introduced me to his ally as Louis Count de l'Orme, only son of the noble house of Bigorre, and first gentleman of his bedchamber. The Duke bowed low, and, with what I judged rather an unnecessary ostentation of politeness, welcomed me to Sedan ; while the Count, with a smile that seemed to imply that he read clearly what was passing in his friend's mind, said in a low tone, "Do not be afraid, Bouillon : if he is not for you, he is not against you."

"He that is not for me," replied the Duke of Bouillon, with that irreverent use of Scriptural expressions which was so common in those days, —"he that is not for me is against me. I love not neutrals. Give me the man who has spirit enough to take some determinate side, and support it with his whole soul."

All the blood in my body, I believe, found

its way up into my cheek ; but I remained silent ; and the Count, seeing that Monsieur de Bouillon was in an irritable mood, and judging that I was not of a disposition patiently to bear many such taunts as he had most undeservedly launched at me, led the way to the barriers.

Monsieur de Riquemont, the Count's chief *Ecuyer*, having been appointed *Mestre de Camp* for the time, opened the barriers and entered the field first, followed by a crowd of valets and *estaffiers*, carrying in a number of lances and pasteboard blocks, made to represent the heads of Moors and Saracens, which were deposited in the middle of the field. The Prince then mounted his horse, and followed by the Dukes of Bouillon, Vendome, and La Valette, rode through the barrier, turning to me as he did so, and calling me to keep near him.

I instantly sprang upon my horse, which little Achilles held ready for me, and galloped after the Count. All those whose rank entitled them to pass did the same. A certain number of grooms and lackeys also were admitted, to hold the horses, amongst whom Achilles contrived to place himself ; and the barriers being closed, the rest of the people ranged themselves without, which was indeed the best situation for viewing the exercises.

At about two-thirds of the course from the entrance, raised above one of the posts which upheld the wooden railing of the enclosure, was a high pillar of wood with a cross-bar at the top, in form of a gallows, and which was in fact called *La potence*. From this was suspended a ring, hanging about a foot below the beam; and during the course, one of the Prince's domestics was mounted on the barrier, supporting himself by the pillar of wood, to ascertain precisely whether those who missed hitting the inside of the ring, and so carrying it away, might not touch its edge, which was counted as an inferior point.

The *Mestre de Camp* now arranged us in the order in which we were to run, and I was glad to find that I should be preceded by five cavaliers; from each of whom I hoped to receive a lesson. The Prince of course took the lead; and I observed that a great deal of dexterity was necessary to couch the lance with grace and ease. After pausing for a moment with the lance erect, he made a *demi-volte*, and gradually dropping the point, brought his elbow slowly to his side; while putting his horse into a canter, and then into a gallop, he kept the point of the weapon steadily above the right ear of his horse, exactly on a line with his own forehead,

till coming near the pillar with his charger at full speed, he struck the ring and bore it away. The marker now cried loudly, "*Un dedans ! un dedans !*" and some of the *estaffiers* ran to place another ring.

In the mean while, amidst the applauses which multitudes always so unscrupulously bestow upon success, the Count, without looking behind, rode round the field, slowly raising the point of his lance, on which he still bore the ring he had carried away. The Duke of Bouillon, notwithstanding his gout, proceeded next to the course ; and, without taking any great pains respecting the grace of his movements, aimed his lance steadily, and carried away the ring. The Duke of Vendome had declined running ; and Monsieur de La Valette, though managing his horse and his lance with the most exquisite grace, passed the ring without hitting it at all. De Varicarville missed the centre, but struck it on the outside, when the marker cried loudly, "*Une atteinte ! une atteinte !*" and the Marquis de Bardouville, who, like a great many other very hard-headed men, was famous for such exercises, spurred on and carried it away like lightning.

It now became my turn ; and I will own that I wished myself any where in the wide world but there. However, there was no remedy ;

and I was very sure that, though I might not be able to carry away, or even touch the ring, I could manage my horse as well as any man in the field. But I had forgotten, that to every such compact as that between a man and his horse, there are two parties, both of whom must be in perfect good-humour. The roan horse which had borne me from Paris was an excellent strong roadster, and sufficiently well broke for all common purposes; but for such exercises as those in which both he and his master were so unwillingly engaged, he had no taste whatever. It was with the greatest difficulty, therefore, that I compelled him to make his *demi-volte*, before beginning the course. This accomplished, he galloped on steadily enough towards the pillar; but just at the moment that I was aiming my lance to the best of my power, the *potence*, the ring, and the man standing on the railing, all seemed to catch his sight at once; and thinking it something very extraordinary, and not at all pleasant, he started sideways from the course, and dashed into the very centre of the field, scattering the *estaffiers* and valets like a flock of sheep, and treading upon the paste-board heads of Moors and Turks, with most pitiless precipitation. Spurs and bridle were all in vain; I might as well have spurred a church-

steeple; and in the end down he came upon his haunches, in the most ungraceful posture in the world, while a loud shout of laughter from the Duke of Bouillon and several others, announced that my misfortune had not afforded the smallest part of the morning's amusement.

God forgive me! I certainly could have committed more than one murder in the height of my wrath; and digging my spurs into my horse's sides, with most unjustifiable passion, till the blood streamed from them, I forced him up, and rode round to the spot where the Duke of Bouillon stood, with intentions which I had luckily time to moderate before I arrived.

I passed on therefore to the Count de Soissons, merely giving the Duke a glance as I passed, in which he might well read what was passing in my heart. He returned it with a cold stare, and then turned to Bardouville with a sneering smile, which had nearly driven me mad.

"Your Highness sees," said I, as I came near the Count, "the unfortunate issue of my attempt to give you pleasure. Perhaps you will now condescend to excuse my farther exposing myself to the laughter of Monsieur de Bouillon and his friends."

"Fie! you are angry, my dear De l'Orme," replied the Count with a degree of good-hu-

mour I hardly deserved. "I will certainly not excuse you going on with the exercises. You managed that horse as well as such a horse could possibly be managed; and a great deal better than any of the laughers would have done: but, though a good strong beast, he is not fit for such games as these; and therefore, as soon as I saw him start, I sent one of my grooms for a managed horse of my own, that has a mouth like velvet, and will obey the least touch of the leg. Mount, my good De l'Orme, and shame these merry fools, by showing them some better horsemanship than they can practise themselves."

The Count then, turning to the rest, kindly amused a few moments in conversation, till such time as he saw his groom trotting down the beautiful charger he proposed to lend me. I made a sign to Achilles to hold the horse I was upon; and alighting, the moment the other passed the barrier, I laid my hand lightly on his shoulder, and sprang into the saddle without touching the stirrup. The courses recommenced, and Monsieur le Comte again carried away the ring. Not so the Duke of Bouillon, who merely touched it on the outer edge. The Duke de La Valette also gained an *atteinte*; and both Varicarville and Bardouville carried it away.

As may be supposed, I had watched narrowly every motion of the other cavaliers, and had remarked, and endeavoured to appropriate, all that sat gracefully upon them. Habituated from my infancy to almost every other corporeal exercise and game, I found no great difficulty in acquiring this; and mounted as I was upon a horse that seemed almost instinctively to know its rider's will and obey it, I had every advantage. The noble animal performed his *demivolte* with the utmost grace and precision; and now, finding by the very touch of the bridle that I had a different creature to deal with, I easily balanced the lance, as I had seen the Count de Soissons, kept the point over my horse's right ear, and somewhat imitating the swiftness with which De Bardouville had run his course, I galloped on at full speed, struck the ring right in the centre, and bore it away at once.

The feelings of a multitude, unlike the feelings of most individuals, do not seem mixed and blended with each other, but each appears separate and distinct, reigns its moment, and then gives way to another, like the passions of an ardent and hasty man; and this probably because the sensations of all the parts of the crowd act in the aggregate, while any counter-acting principle is confined to one or two, and

does not appear. Thus the spectators outside the barriers, who had laughed with the Duke of Bouillon at my former failure, were as ready to triumph *with* me, as *over* me, and greeted my success with a loud shout ; while suddenly bringing my horse in to a walk, I proceeded round the field, slowly raising my lance with the ring still upon the point.

The Count de Soissons fixed his eyes upon me, and gave me a glance expressive of as much pleasure as if he had been the person interested ; while the Duke de Bouillon looked on with an air of the most perfect indifference, and talked aloud with Bardouville upon the pleasures of a barbieued pig. Mixed feelings of indignation and triumph excited me to a pitch of exertion which brought with it greater success than I could have expected. I again carried away the ring, and at the end of the third course found myself only exceeded in the number of points I had made, by the Count de Soissons, who had carried the ring twice and struck it once.

The different pasteboard heads were now placed in the positions assigned for them ; and the Count de Soissons, who generously entered into all my feelings, and saw that anger had made success a matter of importance to me, now

beckoning me to him, bade me in a whisper to remark well the manœuvres of those who preceded me; and, above all things, to take care that I neither dropped my hat, nor withdrew my foot from the stirrup; as, though merely a matter of etiquette, the course was considered lost by such an occurrence. I thanked his Highness for his caution, and fixing my hat more firmly on my head, and myself more steadily in the saddle, I left him to run his course.

The heads had been placed at various distances along the line of the barriers. One, a most ferocious-looking Saracen, was fixed upon an iron stand at about one hundred and twenty feet from the beginning of the course, and raised about eight feet from the ground. This was made to turn upon a pivot, and near it, in the exact centre of the course, was placed a target painted with a head of Medusa. As soon as all was arranged, the Count couched his lance and ran full speed at the Saracen; but not being hit exactly in the centre, the head turned upon its pivot, and the lance passed off.

The Prince, however, rode on, and, tossing the lance to an *estaffier* who stood ready to catch it, turned with a *demi-volte* at the corner, and drawing one of his pistols from the saddle-bow, galloped towards the Medusa in the centre

of the barrier. The crowd on the outside now ran in every direction, and the Count discharging his pistol, hit the face upon the target exactly in the middle of the brow. Without pausing, he urged his horse forward; and making the same turn nearly where I stood, he came back upon the head, and fired his second pistol at it with the same success. He then made a complete *volte*, during which he replaced his pistol, drew his sword, and galloping past the third head, which was placed upon a little mound of earth about two feet high, near the opposite barrier, he gave point with his sword in tierce, struck it on the forehead, and raising his hand in quarte, held up the head upon his sword's point.

I found that the groom who had brought down the Count's horse for me had taken care to provide pistols also; and as the principal feats in this course were performed with weapons which I was accustomed to, I did not fear the result. The gentlemen who preceded me met with various success; but Bardouville, who was certainly the most stupid of them all in mind, was the most expert in body, and carried every point. I followed his example, and succeeded in bearing off the Saracen's head upon the point of my lance, making both my

shots tell upon the head of Medusa, and bringing up the third head upon the point of my sword.

Accidental, or not accidental, my success changed the posture of affairs, for the Duke of Bouillon from that moment seemed to regard me in a very different light from that which he had done at first; and as we rode out of the barriers, he kept the Prince in close conversation, which from the glancing of his eye every now and then towards me, I could not doubt had some reference to myself.

## CHAPTER V.

ON our arrival at the citadel, the two princes separated; and Monsieur le Comte retired to his own apartments, whither I followed him in company with the principal officers of his household. As he passed on into his own saloon, he made me a sign to enter also; and while a valet pulled off his boots, congratulated me upon my success in the tilt-yard. "Nor must you be discontented, De l'Orme," continued he, "because there was some little pain mingled with the first of your feats: it rendered your after-triumph the greater."

"Certainly, Monseigneur," replied I, "I would rather it had not happened; but yet of course I do not look upon it as any very serious misfortune."

"And yet," said he with a smile, "you looked at the time as if you felt it one. We

are apt, my dear Count, to fancy in our youth that the sweet cup of life has not a drop of bitter; but we all soon discover that it is not so. With life, as with every thing else, we find the bright and delightful scattered thinly amidst an immensity of baser matter. Those who seek pearls are obliged to plunge into the deep briny sea to drag them up, and even then perchance out of every shell, ten will be worthless: but did we find pearls hanging amongst grapes, or diamonds at the root of roses, we should value neither one nor the other as they merit. As it is, the threads of pain are woven so intimately in the web of life, that they form but one piece; and wise was the hand that ordered it so."

The Count being by this time disembarrassed of his boots, he dismissed the lackey, and then proceeded: "Now that we are alone," said he, "I will give up my homily, for I have other matter to consult you upon. This morning you said, in speaking of De Retz, that you would willingly undertake and execute for me any commission similar to that which he so dexterously exercises. Are you still so inclined?—Mark me, De l'Orme," he added suddenly, "you are bound by nothing that you said this morning. Men of a quick and ardent temperament like yours, are often led from one step to an-

other in the heat of conversation, till they promise, and feel willing to perform at the time, many things that, upon mature consideration, they would be very sorry to undertake. Their feelings go on like the waves of the sea, each hurrying forward the one before it, till the ripple becomes a billow that dashes over every obstacle in its way. Then comes consideration, like the ebb of the tide, and their wishes flow gradually back, far from the point at which they had arrived at first. Should this be your case, you are free to retract; and I tell you beforehand, that the service upon which I would put you is one of difficulty, and also of some personal danger to yourself."

I replied by assuring the Count that what I had said in my former conversation with him, unlike most conversations on earth, contained nothing that I could wish unsaid—that my offer to serve him had originated in personal attachment, and that of course that attachment had much increased, instead of diminishing, by all that had passed during the morning. Danger and difficulty, I farther said, were hardly to be looked upon as objections, when by encountering them we could prove our sincerity; and therefore, that he had nothing to do but point out the course he wished me to

follow, and he might feel assured I would do so to the best of my abilities.

“Be it so then,” replied the Count; “and I entertain no doubt of either your discretion or success. Before your arrival, I had entrusted to Monsieur de Retz all that a man of his profession could do for me in the capital; but still there is much more to be done. He has undertaken to win one part of society to our cause; but you must know that in Paris there is a complete class of men, distinct and separate from all the rest of the people, whom it concerns me much to gain, for the purpose of securing the metropolis. You will be curious to know what class I speak of:—I mean,” he added with a smile, “the honourable body of braves, swash bucklers, swindlers, and, in short, the whole company of those who, having no property of their own, live at the expense of others. I am credibly informed that these persons form one great body, and have certain means of corresponding and communicating with each other throughout the kingdom. The number in Paris is said to be twenty thousand. You may well look surprised; but it is an undoubted fact; and it is to gain these respectable allies, that I now intend to send you back to the capital. The mission, truly, is not a very elevated one; but when I do not disdain to treat with such a

body, you must not scorn to be my ambassador. In the conduct of this business, you and De Retz must be in constant correspondence; for though his clerical character stands in the way of his taking any active part in the negotiation itself, his knowledge of Paris, and all that it contains, may be of the greatest service to you, in facilitating your communication with these gentry, who are not in general very fond of trusting their secrets with strangers."

The Prince was then proceeding once more to give the motives which induced him to look upon nothing as mean, which could insure the most speedy termination to an enterprise on which the fate of France depended,—reasoning with all the eloquence of a man who, not very sure of being in the right, hopes to persuade himself thereof, while he is persuading another; but I assured him in reply, that I was perfectly convinced of the propriety of the conduct which he pursued, and only required to be made perfectly aware of the nature of my mission, what I was to demand, and what I might promise on his part.

"Much must be left to your own discretion," replied the Count; "the object is to insure that these men will instantly rise in my favour, on a given signal; but not to commit me to them so far, that I cannot retract should any change of

circumstances induce me to abandon the enterprise."

The sketch of Monsieur le Comte, as drawn by the Marquis de St. Brie, instantly rose to my recollection at these words; and I saw how truly he had spoken, when he said, that want of resolution was the great defect of the Count's character. How dangerous such irresolution must ever be in the conduct of great undertakings was at once evident; and I almost shuddered to think what might be the possible consequences to all concerned, if the struggle that was likely to ensue could not be terminated at a blow. This, more than any other consideration, made me resolve to exert the utmost energies of my mind, in the part that was allotted to me, for the purpose of preparing every thing to act, *à la fois*, on the same point at the same moment, and produce one great and overpowering effect. I promised therefore to do my best, according to the views his Highness entertained; and said that I doubted not of my success with the persons to whom I was sent, provided I was furnished with the necessary means to touch their hearts, through the only points in which the hearts of such men are vulnerable.

"You shall have it, De l'Orme! you shall have it," replied the Count, "though money is

one of those things of which we stand most in need. But you will not set out till to-morrow morning; and before that time, I will try to furnish you with a few thousand crowns, "for I know it is absolutely necessary; especially as I trust you will, on your return, bring with you two or three hundred recruits; for should you find any of our friends the swash-bucklers, who have a grain or two more honesty than the rest, you must enlist them in our good cause, and send them all by one over to Me . . . But now bid ye to the rest till dawn, and accept, as a first earnest of my friendship, the good horse on whose back you were so successful just now. No thanks! no thanks, my good De l'Orme! Take him as he stands; and he may perhaps recall me to your remembrance when Louis Bourbon is no more."

There was a touch of sadness in the Count's tone that found its way to the heart, and, like the whole of his conversation, won upon the affection. It seemed to familiarize the man with his inmost feelings, and any coldness to his cause would have been like a breach of confidence. A prince binds himself to his inferior, by making him the sharer of his pleasures or his follies; but he binds his inferior to him by admitting him into the solemn tabernacle of the heart.

On retiring from the Prince's apartments, I felt no inclination to join any of the merry, thoughtless parties of his friends that were roving about the town and the citadel, some running to the mall, some to the tennis court, and all eager to chase away those precious hours, which man the prodigal squanders so thoughtlessly in his youth, to covet with so much avarice in his latter days. On the stairs, however, that conducted to my own apartments, I met Monsieur de Varicarville, who gave me the good morning, and stopped to speak with me. "I know not, Monsieur de l'Orme," said he, "whether I am about to take a liberty with you, but I have just seen your servant conducted to the private cabinet of the Duke of Bouillon. It appeared to me this morning that you were not inclined to attach yourself to the Duke's party; and that, from that or some other cause, he seemed somewhat ill-disposed towards you at first. I therefore presume to tell you of your servant's having gone to him, that if you did not yourself send him, you may make what enquiries you think fit. You are still young in the intrigues of this place, or I should not give you this warning."

This took place not above ten steps from my own chamber; and after thanking Varicarville

for his information, I asked him to wait with me for Achilles's return, and we would question him together concerning his absence. This mark of confidence on my part opened the way for the same on the part of the Marquis; and after proceeding cautiously step by step for a few minutes, both fearful that we might betray in some degree the trust reposed in us by Monsieur le Comte, if we spoke openly, and neither wishing to intrude himself into the private opinions of the other, we gradually found that there was nothing to be concealed on either side, and that our opinions tended immediately towards the same point.

This once established, and the communication instantly became easy between us. Varicarville spoke his sentiments freely concerning the situation and character of the Count, and the schemes and wishes of the Duke of Bouillon, whose endeavours to hurry the Prince into a civil war were every day becoming more active and more successful.

“Notwithstanding the advantages which may accrue to himself,” said Varicarville, “and which are certainly very many, I do believe that the Duke seeks principally the good and honour of Monsieur le Comte; and did I feel sure that the event we desire could be procured

by a single battle, or even a single campaign, I should not oppose him ; for, an excellent soldier and even a skilful general, the Count would be almost certain to overcome the only disposable force which the Cardinal could oppose to him. This, however, would not be the only arms with which the wily Minister would fight him :—he would employ negotiations, treaties, and intrigues ; and thus he would conquer, and even intimidate, a man who has really ten times more personal courage than those who most eagerly urge him to war. From what you have said, I easily see that you have discovered the Prince's defect :—he has no resolution. He has the courage of a lion ; but still he has not resolution. The first, to use the words of the Abbé de Retz, is an ordinary, and even a vulgar quality ; the second is rare even in great men ; but yet there are two situations in which it is eminently necessary,—the ministry of a great country, and the chief of a conspiracy. Richelieu has it in the most eminent degree ; and the man who would oppose him with success, must not therein be deficient."

While he spoke, the door of the chamber opening, Achilles made his appearance, and was running up to me, when he perceived Monsieur de Varicarville, and suddenly stopped.

“What were you going to say, Achilles?” demanded I. “You may speak freely:—this is a friend.”

“But what I have to say is a state secret, which I shall communicate to none but your Lordship,” replied the little player, with a look of vast importance. “Deep in the bottom of my profound heart will I hide it, till opportunity shall unlock the door and draw it forth from its dungeon.”

Varicarville looked somewhat surprised; but I, who better understood my attendant's vein, merely replied, “You had better draw it forth immediately yourself, my good Achilles, for fear I should break the dungeon door as you call it, and your head both in one.”

“Oh, if your Lordship insists,” replied the little player, not displeased at the bottom of his heart to be delivered of his secret at once, “I have nothing for it but to obey. Know then, illustrious scion of a noble house, that as I was returning from that famous field, wherein you this morning covered yourself with victory, one of the domestic servants of the great and puissant Prince, Frederic Maurice, Duke of Bouillon and Sovereign of Sedan, pulled me by the tags of my doublet, and insinuated, in a low and solemn voice, that his master wanted to

speaking with me : to which I replied, that duty is the call which generous souls obey, and therefore that I must see whether you stood in need of any thing, before I could follow him. Finding, however, that you were closeted with Monsieur le Comte, I proceeded to the lodging of the high and puissant Prince, who asked me if I were much in your private secrets. To this I answered, that I did not believe there was a thought on earth which you concealed from me."

"You were either a great fool or a great knave to say so," replied I, "and I do not very well know which."

"A knave, a knave ! please your worship," replied Achilles with a low bow. "A fool has something degrading in it. I would rather at any time be supposed to exercise the profession of *Hermes* than that of *Æsculapius*.—But listen ! He next asked me how long I had been in your worship's service. On which I replied, all my life—that we had been brought up together from the cradle.—My mother, I assured him, was your worship's wet-nurse, so that we were foster-brothers."

"A pretty apocrypha truly !" replied I ; "but go on."

"His Highness then asked me," proceeded Achilles, "whether your Lordship leaned really

to peace or war. To which I replied, that as yet, I believed, you were quite undecided, although your natural disposition led you to war, for which you had so strong a turn, that you must needs go fighting in Catalonia, when you had no occasion in life. At this I thought he looked pleased ; but I was afraid of going any farther, for fear of committing your Excellence. So then, his Majesty proceeded to say, that I must try and determine you to war, and that you must try and determine Monsieur le Comte ; and on the back of this he gave me at least one hundred excellent reasons why men should cut one another's throats, all which I have forgot ; but doubtless your Eminence can imagine them. He then gave me a purse, not at all as a bribe, he said, but merely for the trouble he had given me ; and made me promise at the same time not to reveal one word of what had passed to any one, which I vowed upon my honour and my reputation, and came away to tell your Grace as fast as possible."

" And your honour and your reputation, *mon droll !*" said Varicarville, " what has become of them ?"

" Oh, your worship !" replied Achilles, " I stretched them so often in my youth, that they cracked long ago ; and then, instead of patching

them up as many people do, which is but a sorry contrivance, and not at all safe, I threw them away altogether, and have done ever since quite as well without."

After having sent Achilles away, I consulted with Varicarville in regard to the proper course of proceeding under such circumstances.

"All you can do," replied he, "is to take no notice, and remain firm—if I understand you rightly, that you are determined to join with those who would dissuade the Count from proceeding to so dangerous an experiment as war."

"I am certainly so far determined," replied I, "that I will continue to oppose such a proceeding, till I see the Count once resolved upon it; but after that, I will, so far from endeavouring to shake his resolution, do all in my power to keep him steady in it; and to promote the success of the enterprise; for, I am convinced, that after that, hesitation and conflicting opinions in the party of the Prince might bring about his ruin, but could do no good."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Varicarville, "and that is all that I could hope or require. When I see you alone with the Count, I shall now feel at ease, convinced that, as long as he continues undecided, you will continue to oppose any act of hostility to the

government; and when he is decided, and the die cast, we must both do our best to make the issue successful."

Thus ended my conference with Varicarville, and nothing farther occurred during the day, affecting myself personally. I heard of the arrival of several fresh parties, both from the interior of France and from the adjacent countries, which were almost peopled with French exiles; and Achilles also brought me news that the Baron de Beauvau had returned from the Low Countries, accompanied by a Spanish nobleman, as plenipotentiary from the Archduke Leopold and the Cardinal Infant of Spain; but nothing of any consequence happened till the evening, in which I was at all called to take part.

I strolled, however, through the town of Sedan, and from the labours which were hurrying forward at various points of the fortifications, I was led to conclude that the Duke of Bouillon himself anticipated but a short interval of peace. At length, as I approached an unfinished horn-work on the banks of the Meuse, a sentinel dropped his partizan to my breast, bidding me stand back; and, my walk being interrupted in that direction, I returned to the citadel and proceeded to my own chamber.

## CHAPTER VI.

I WAS standing at the window of my bed-chamber, in one of those meditative, almost sad moods which often fill up the pauses of more active and energetic being, when the mind falls back upon itself, after the stir and bustle of great enterprises, and the silent, moral voice within seems to rebuke us for the worm-like pettiness of our earthly struggles, and the vain futility of all our mortal endeavours. —

Nothing could be more lovely than the scene from the window. The sun was setting over the dark forest of Ardennes, which skirting all round the northern limits of the view, formed a dark purple girdle to the beautiful principality of Sedan: but day had only yet so far declined as to give a rich and golden splendour to the whole atmosphere, and his beams still flashed against every point of the landscape, where any bright object met them, as if they encountered a

living diamond. Running from the south-east to the north were the heights of Amblemont, from the soft green summit of which, stretching up to the zenith, the whole sky was mottled with a flight of light high clouds, which caught every beam of the sinking sun, and blushed brighter and brighter as he descended. A thousand villages and hamlets with their little spires, and now and then the turrets of the chateaux, scattered through the valley, peeped out from every clump of trees. The flocks of sheep and the herds of cattle winding along towards their folds, gave an air of peaceful abundance to the scene, and the grand Meuse wandering through its rich meadows with a thousand meanders, and glowing brightly in the evening light, added something both solemn and majestic to the whole. I was watching the progress of a boat gliding silently along the stream, whose calm waters it scarcely seemed to ruffle in its course; and, while passion, and ambition, and pride, and vanity, and the thousands of irritable feelings that struggled in my bosom during the day were lulled into tranquillity by the influence of the soft, peaceful scene before my eyes, I was thinking how happy it would be to glide through life like that little bark, with a full sail, and a smooth and golden tide, till the stream of exist-

ence fell into the dark ocean of eternity—when my dream was broken by some one knocking at my chamber-door.

Though I wished them no good for their interruption, I bade them come in; and the moment after, the Duke of Bouillon himself stood before me.

“Monsieur de l’Orme,” said he, advancing, and doffing his hat, “I hope I do not interrupt your contemplations.” I bowed, and begged him to be seated; and after a moment or two he proceeded: “I am happy in finding you alone: for, though certainly one is bound to do whatever one conceives right before the whole world, should chance order it so; yet of course, when one has to acknowledge oneself in the wrong, it is more pleasant to do so in private,—especially,” he added with a smile, “for a sovereign prince in his own castle. I was this morning, Monsieur de l’Orme, both rude and unjust towards you; and I have come to ask your pardon frankly. Do you give it me?”

Although I believed there was at least as much policy as candour in the conduct of the Duke, I did not suffer that conviction to affect my behaviour towards him, and I replied: “Had I preserved any irritation, my Lord, from this morning, the condescension and frankness of

your present apology would of course have obliterated it at once."

I thought I saw a slight colour mount in the Duke's cheek at the word apology; for men will do a thousand things which they do not like to hear qualified by even the mildest word that can express them; and I easily conceived, that though the proud Lord of Sedan had for his own purposes fully justified me in the use of the term, it hurt his ears to hear that he had apologized to any one.

He proceeded however: "I was, in truth, rather irritable this morning, and I hastily took up an opinion, which I since find, from the conversation of Monsieur le Comte, was totally false; namely, that you were using all your endeavours to dissuade him from the only step which can save himself and his country from ruin. Our levies were nearly made, our envoy on his very return from the Low Countries, all our plans concerted, and the Count perfectly determined, but the very day before your arrival. Now I find him again undetermined; and though I am convinced I was in error, yet you will own that it was natural I should attribute this change to your counsels."

"Your Excellence attributed to me," I replied, with a smile at the importance wherewith a suspicious person often contrives to invest a circum-

stance or a person who has really none,—“Your Excellence attributed to me much more influence with Monsieur le Comte than I possess: but, if it would interest you at all to hear what are the opinions of a simple gentleman of his Highness’s household, and by what rule he was determined to govern his conduct, I have not the slightest objection to give you as clear an insight into my mind, as you have just given me of your own.”

The Duke perhaps felt that he was not acting a very candid part, and he rather hesitated while he replied, that such a confidence would give him pleasure.

“My opinion then, my Lord,” replied I, “of that step which you think necessary to the Count’s safety, namely, a civil war, is that it is the most dangerous he could take, except that of hesitating after once having fully determined.”

“But why do you think it so dangerous?” demanded the Duke: “surely no conjuncture could be more propitious. We have troops, and supplies, and allies, internal and external, which place success beyond a doubt. The Count is adored by the people and by the army—scarcely ten men will be found in France to draw a sword against him. He is courage and bravery itself—an able politician—an excellent general—a man of vigorous resolution.”

This was said so seriously, that it was difficult to suppose the Duke was not in earnest ; and yet to believe that a man of his keen sagacity was blind to the one great weakness of the Prince's character was absolutely impossible. If it was meant as a sort of bait to draw from me my opinions of the Count, it did not succeed, for I suspected it at the time ; and replied at once, " Most true ! He is all that you say ; and yet, Monsieur de Bouillon, though my opinion or assistance can be of very little consequence, either in one scale or the other, my determination is fixed, to oppose, to the utmost of my power, any step towards war, whenever his Highness does me the honour of speaking to me on the subject,—so long, at least, as I see that his mind remains undetermined. The moment, however, I hear him declare that he has taken his resolution, no one shall be more strenuous than myself, in endeavouring to keep him steady therein. From that instant I shall conceive myself, and strive to make him believe, that one retrograde step is destruction ; and I pledge myself to exert all the faculties of my mind and body, as far as those very limited faculties may go, to assist and promote the enterprise to the utmost of my power."

" If that be the case," replied the Duke, " I

feel sure that I shall this very night be able to show that war is now inevitable ; and to determine the Count to pronounce for it himself. A council will be held at ten o'clock to-night, on various matters of importance ; and I doubt not that his Highness will require your assistance and opinion. Should he do so, I rely upon your word to do all that you can to close the door on retrocession, when once the Count has chosen his line of conduct."

The noble Duke now spoke in the real tone of his feelings. To do him justice, he had shown infinite friendship towards his princely guest ; and it was not unnatural that he should strive by every means to bring over those who surrounded the Prince to his own opinion. When as now he quitted all art as far as he could, for he was too much habituated to policy to abandon it ever entirely, I felt a much higher degree of respect for him ; and, as he went on boldly, soliciting me to join myself to his party, and trying to lead me by argument from one step to another, I found much more difficulty in resisting, than I had before experienced in seeing through and parrying his artifices.

It is in times of faction and intrigue, when every single voice is of import to one party or the other, that small men gain vast consequence ; and, apt to attribute to their individual merit

the court paid to them for their mere integral weight, they often sell their support to flattery and attention, when they would have yielded to no other sort of bribery. However much I might overrate my own importance from the efforts of the Duke to gain me—and I do not at all deny that I did so,—I still continued firm; and at last contenting himself with what I had at first promised, he turned the conversation to myself, and I found that he had drawn from the Count so much of my history as referred to the insurrection of Catalonia, and my interview with Richelieu.

I felt, as we conversed, that my character and mind were undergoing a strict and minute examination, through the medium of every word I spoke; and, what between the vanity of appearing to the best advantage, and the struggle to hide the consciousness that I was under such a scrutiny, I believe that I must have shown considerably more affectation than ability. The conviction that this was the case, too, came to embarrass me still more; and, feeling that I was undervaluing my own mind altogether, I suddenly broke off at one of the Duke's questions, which somewhat too palpably smacked of the investigation with which he was amusing himself, and replied: "Men's characters, Monseigneur, are best seen in their actions, when

they are free to act; and in their words, when they think those words fall unnoticed; but, depend upon it, one cannot form a correct estimate of the mind of another by besieging it in form. We instantly put ourselves upon the defensive when we find an army sitting down before the citadel of the heart; and whatever be the ability of our adversary, it is very difficult either to take us by storm, or to make us capitulate."

"Nay," replied the Duke, "indeed you are mistaken. I had no such intention as you seem to think. My only wish was to amuse away an hour in your agreeable society, ere joining his Highness, to proceed with him to the council: but I believe it is nearly time that I should go."

The Duke now left me. I was not at all satisfied with my own conduct during the interview that had just passed; and, returning to my station at the window, I watched the last rays of day fade away from the sky, and one bright star after another gaze out at the world below, while a thousand wandering fancies filled my brain, taking a calm but melancholy hue, from the solemn aspect of the night, and a still more gloomy one, from feeling how little my own actions were under the control of my reason, and how continually, even in a casual conversa-

tion, I behaved and spoke in the most opposite manner to that which reflection would have taught me to pursue.

Sick of the present, my mind turned to other days. Many a memory and many a regret were busy about my heart, conjuring up dreams, and hopes, and wishes passed away—the throng of all those bright things we leave behind with early youth and never shall meet again, if it be not in a world beyond the tomb. All the sounds of earth sunk into repose, so that I could hear even the soft murmur of the Meuse, and the sighing of the summer-breeze wandering through the embrasures of the citadel. The cares, the labours, the anxieties, and all the grievous realities of life, seemed laid in slumber with the day that nursed them; while fancy, imagination, memory, every thing that lives upon *that which is not*, seemed to assert their part, and take possession of the night. I remembered many such a starry sky in my own beautiful land, when, without a heart-ach or a care, I had gazed upon the splendour of the heavens, and raised my heart in adoration to Him that spread it forth; but now, I looked out into the deep darkness, and found painful, painful memory mingling gall with all the sweetness of its contemplation. I thought of

my sweet Helen, and remembered how many an obstacle was cast between us. I thought of my father, who had watched my youth like an opening flower, who had striven to instil into my mind all that was good and great, and I recollected the pain that my unexplained absence must have given. I thought of my mother, who had nursed my infant years, who had founded all her happiness on me—who had watched, and wept, and suffered for me, in my illness; and I called up every tone of her voice, every glance of her eye, every smile of her lip, till my heart ached even with the thoughts it nourished; and a tear, I believe, found its way into my eye—when suddenly, as it fixed upon the darkness, something white seemed to glide slowly across before me. It had the form—it had the look—it had the aspect of my mother. My eyes strained upon it, as if they would have burst from their sockets. I saw it distinct and plain as I could have seen her in the open day. My heart beat, my brain whirled, and I strove to speak; but my words died upon my lips; and when at length I found the power to utter them, the figure was gone, and all was blank darkness, with the bright stars twinkling through the deep azure of the sky.

I know—I feel sure, now, as I sit and reason

upon it, that the whole was imagination, to which the hour, the darkness, and my own previous thoughts, all contributed: but still, the fancy must have been most overpoweringly strong to have thus compelled the very organs of vision to co-operate in the deceit; and at the moment, I had no more doubt that I had seen the spirit of my mother than I had of my own existence. The memory of the whole remains still as strongly impressed upon my mind as ever; and certainly, as far as actual impressions went, every circumstance appeared as substantially true as any other thing we see in the common course of events. Memory, however, leaves the mind to reason calmly; and I repeat, that I believe the whole to have been produced by a highly-excited imagination: for I am sure that the Almighty Being who gave laws to nature, and made it beautifully regular even in its irregularities, never suffers his own laws to be changed or interrupted, except for some great and extraordinary purpose.

I do not deny that such a thing has happened.—or that it may happen again; but, even in opposition to the seeming evidence of my senses, I will not believe that such an interruption of the regular course of nature did occur in my own case.

## CHAPTER VII.

STILL, at the time I believed it fully ; and, after a few minutes given to wild, confused imaginings, I sat down and forcibly collected my thoughts, to bend them upon all the circumstances of my fate. My mother's spirit must have appeared to me, I thought, as a warning, probably, of my own approaching death : but death was a thing that in itself I little feared ; and all I hoped was, that some opportunity might be given me of distinguishing myself before the grave closed over my mortal career. Now, all the trifles, which we have time to make of consequences when existence seems indefinitely spread out before us, lost their value in my eyes, as I imagined, or rather as I felt, what we ought always to feel, that every hour of being is limited. One plays boldly when one has nothing to lose, and carelessly when one has nothing to gain ; and thus,

in the very fancy that life was fleeting from me fast, I found a sort of confidence and firmness of mind, which is generally only gained by long experience of our own powers as compared with those of others.

While the thoughts of what I had seen were yet fresh in my mind, a messenger announced to me that the Prince desired my presence in the great hall of the chateau as speedily as possible; and, without staying to make any change of dress, I followed down the stairs. As I was crossing the lesser court, I encountered my little attendant. He had been straying somewhat negligently through the good town of Sedan, and had been kept some hours at the gates of the citadel on his return.

I had not time, however, to give him any very lengthened reprehension, but bidding him go to my chamber and wait for me, I followed the Count's servant to the council-hall.

It was a vast vaulted chamber in the very centre of the citadel; and the candles upon the table in the midst, though they served sufficiently to light the part of the room in which they were placed, left the whole of the rest in semi-obscurity; so that when I entered I could but see a group of dark figures, seated irregularly about a council board, with several others dispersed in twos and threes, talking

together in various parts of the room, as if waiting the arrival of some other person.

The words "Here he is, here he is!" pronounced more than once, as I entered, made me almost fancy that the council had delayed its deliberations for me; but the vanity of such an idea soon received a rebuff, for a moment after the voice of the Count de Soissons himself, who sat at the head of the table, replied, "No, no, it is only the Count de l'Orme. Monsieur de Guise disdains to hurry himself, let who will wait."

Advancing to the table, I now found Monsieur le Comte, with Bardouville, Varicarville, St. Ibal, and several others whom I did not know, seated round the table, while the Duke of Bouillon was conversing with some strangers at a little distance. But my greatest surprise was to find Monsieur de Retz near the Count de Soissons, though I had left him so short a time before at Paris. He seemed to be in deep thought; but his ideas, I believe, were not quite so abstracted as they appeared: and on my approaching him, he rose and embraced me as if we had known each other for centuries, saying at the same time in my ear, "I hear you have received the true faith. Be a martyr to it this night, if it be necessary."

I now took a seat next to Varicarville, who whispered to me, "We have here an ambassador from Spain, and you will see how laudibly willing we Frenchmen are to be gulled. He will promise us men and money, and what not, this Marquis de Villa Franca; but when the time comes for performance, not a man nor a stiver will be forthcoming."

"Perhaps I may thwart him," replied I, remembering, at the sound of his name, that I had in my hands a pledge of some worth in the diamonds which Achilles had pilfered at Barcelona. Varicarville looked surprised; but at that moment our conversation was interrupted by the Duke of Bouillon turning round, and observing that the conduct of Monsieur de Guise was unaccountable in keeping such an assembly waiting in the manner which he did.

"To council, Gentlemen!" said the Count hastily. "We have waited too long for this noble Prince of Lorraine. To council!"

The rest of the party now took their seats, and the Baron de Beauvau rising, informed the Count that he had executed faithfully his embassy to the Archduke Leopold and the Cardinal Infant, who each promised to furnish his Highness with a contingent of seven thousand men, and two hundred thousand crowns in

money, in case he determined upon the very just and necessary warfare to which he was called by the voice not only of all France, but all Europe,—a war which, by one single blow, would deliver his native country from her oppressor, and restore the blessing of peace to a torn and suffering world. He then proceeded to enter into various particulars and details, which I now forget; but it was very easy to perceive from the whole, that Monsieur de Beauvau was one of the strongest advocates for war. He ended by stating, that the Marquis de Villa Franca, then present, had been sent by the Cardinal Infant to receive the final determination of the Prince.

My eyes followed the direction of his as he spoke, and rested on a tall, dark man who sat next to the Duke of Bouillon, listening to what passed, with more animation in his looks than the nobility of Spain generally allowed to appear. He was simply dressed in black; but about his person might be seen a variety of rich jewels, evidently showing that the pillage which I had seen committed on his house at Barcelona had not cured him of his passion for precious stones.

After the Baron de Beauvau had given an account of his mission, the Duke of Bouillon

rose, and said, that now, as the noble Princes of the House of Austria had made them such generous and friendly offers, and sent a person of such high rank to receive their determination, all that remained for them to do was, to fix finally whether they would, by submitting to a base and oppressive Minister, stoop their heads at once to the block and axe; and add all the most illustrious names of France to the catalogue of Richelieu's murders; or whether they would, by one great and noble effort, cast off the chains of an usurper, and free their King, their country, and themselves.

The Duke spoke long and eloquently. He urged the propriety of war upon every different motive—upon expediency, upon necessity, upon patriotism. He addressed himself first to the nobler qualities of his hearers,—their courage, their love of their country, their own honour, and dignity; and then to those still stronger auxiliaries, their weaknesses,—their vanity, their ambition, their pride, their avarice; but while he did so, he artfully spread a veil over them all, lest shame should step in, and recognising them in their nakedness, hold them back from the point towards which he led them. He spoke as if for the whole persons there assembled, and as if seeking to win them each to

his opinion; but his speech was in fact directed towards the Count de Soissons, on whose determination of course the whole event depended.

Varicarville did not suffer the Duke's persuasions to pass, without casting his opinion in the still wavering balance of the Count's mind, and urging in plain but energetic language every motive which could induce the Prince to abstain from committing himself to measures that he might afterwards disapprove.

It is a common weakness with irresolute people, always to attach more importance to a new opinion than to an old one; and Monsieur le Comte, turning to De Retz, pressed him to speak his sentiments upon the measure under consideration. The Abbé declined, protesting his inexperience and incapability, as long as such abnegation might set forth his modesty to the best advantage, and enhance the value of his opinion; but when he found himself urged, he rose and spoke somewhat to the following effect.

“I see myself surrounded by the best and dearest friends of Monsieur le Comte; and yet, I am bold to say that there is not one noble gentleman amongst them, who has a warmer love for his person, or a greater regard for his dignity and honour, than myself. Did I see

that dignity in danger, did I see that honour touched, by his remaining in inactivity, my voice should be the first for war; but while both are in security, nothing shall ever make me counsel him to a measure by which both are hazarded. I speak merely of Monsieur le Comte, for it is his interests that we are here to consider: it is he that must decide our actions, and it is his honour and reputation that are risked by the determination. To me it appears clear, that by remaining at peace, his dignity is in perfect safety. His retreat to Sedan guarded him against the meannesses to which the minister wished to force him. The general hatred borne towards the Cardinal, turns the whole warmth of popular love and public admiration towards the Count's exile. The favour of the people, also, is always more secure in inactivity than in activity, because the glory of action depends upon success, of which no one can be certain: that of inaction, in the present circumstances, is sure, being founded on public hatred towards a Minister—one of those unalterable things on which one may always count. The public always have hated, and always will hate the Minister, be he who he will; and be his talents and his virtues what they may. He may have at first a momentary popularity,

and he may have brief returns of it; but envy, hatred, and malice towards the Minister are always at the bottom of the vulgar heart; and as they could never get through life without having the Devil to charge with all their sins, so can they never be contented, without laying all their woes, misfortunes, cares, and grievances, to the door of the Minister. Thus then, hating the Cardinal irremediably, they will always love the Count as his enemy, unless his Highness risks his own glory, by involving the nation in intestine strife. It is therefore my most sincere opinion, that as long as the Minister does not himself render war inevitable, the interest, the honour, the dignity of the Prince, all require peace. Richelieu's bodily powers are every day declining, while the hatred of the people every day increases towards him; and their love for Monsieur le Comte augments in the same proportion. In the mean while, the eyes of all Europe behold with admiration a Prince of the blood royal of France enduring a voluntary exile, rather than sacrifice his dignity: and, with the power and influence to maintain himself against all the arts and menaces of an usurping Minister, still patriotically refraining from the hazardous experiment of war, which in compensation for certain calamities, offers

maintain it ; but that when once war was proved to be unavoidable, the more boldly it was undertaken, and the more resolutely it was carried on, the greater was the probability of success, and the surer the honour to be gained."

"Such also is my opinion," said the Prince, "and on this then let us conclude, to remain at peace till we are driven to war ; but to act so as to make our enemies repent it, when they render war inevitable."

"Whether it is so or not, at this moment," said the Duke of Bouillon, "your Highness will judge, after having cast your eyes over that paper;" and he laid a long-written scroll before the Count de Soissons.

The Count raised it, and all eyes turned upon him while he read. After running over the first ordinary forms, the Count's brow contracted, and biting his lip, he handed the paper to Varicarville, bidding him read it aloud. "It is fit," said he, "that all should know and witness, that necessity, and not inclination, leads me to plunge my country in the misfortunes of civil war. Read, Varicarville, read!"

Varicarville glanced his eyes over the paper, and then, with somewhat of an unsteady voice, read the following proclamation :—

*"In the King's name !\* Dear and well-be-*

\* Translation of the original document.

loved. The fears which we entertain, that certain rumours lately spread abroad of new factions and conspiracies, whereby various of our rebellious subjects endeavour to trouble the repose of our kingdom, should inspire you with vain apprehensions, you not knowing the particulars, have determined us to make those particulars public, in order that you may render thanks to God for having permitted us to discover the plots of our enemies, in time to prevent their malice from making itself felt, to the downfall of the State.

“ We should never have believed, after the lenity and favour which we have on all occasions shown to our Cousin the Count de Soissons, more especially in having pardoned him his share in the horrible conspiracy of 1636, that he would have embarked in similar designs, had not the capture of various seditious emissaries, sent into our provinces for the purpose of exciting rebellion, of levying troops against our service, of debauching our armies, and of shaking the fidelity of our subjects, together with the confessions of the said emissaries, fully proved and established the criminality of our said Cousin's designs.

“ The levies which are publicly made under commissions from our said Cousin—the hostili-

ties committed upon the bodies of our faithful soldiers, established in guard upon the frontiers of Champagne—the confession of the courier called Vausselle, who has most providentially fallen into our hands, stating that he had been sent on the part of the said Count de Soissons, the Dukes of Guise and Bouillon, to our dearly beloved brother, Gaston Duke of Orleans, for the purpose of seducing our said brother to join and aid in the treasonable plans of the said conspirators; and the farther confession of the said Vausselle, stating that the Count de Soissons, together with the Dukes of Guise and Bouillon, conjointly and severally, had treated and conspired with the Cardinal Infant of Spain, from whom they had received and were to receive notable sums of money, and from whom they expected the aid and abetment of various bodies of troops and warlike munition, designed to act against their native country of France, and us their born liege Lord and Sovereign—These, and various other circumstances, having given us clear knowledge and cognizance of that whereof we would willingly have remained in doubt, we are now called upon, in justice to ourself and to our subjects, to declare and pronounce the said Count de Soissons, together with the Dukes of Guise and Bouillon, and all

who shall give them aid, assistance, counsel, or abetment, enemies to the state of France, and rebels to their lawful Sovereign; without, within the space of one month from the date hereof, they present themselves at our Court, wherever it may be for the time established, and humbly acknowledging their fault, have recourse to our royal clemency.

(Signed)      LOUIS."

No paper could have been better devised for restoring union to the councils of the Count de Soissons. War was now inevitable; and, after a good deal of hurried, desultory conversation, in which no one but the Duke of Bouillon showed any great presence of mind, my opinion as the youngest person at the table was the first formally called for by the Count de Soissons. I had not yet spoken since the King's proclamation had been read, and had been sitting listening with some surprise to find, that men of experience, talents, and high repute, carried on great enterprises in the same desultory and irregular manner that schoolboys would plot a frolic on their master. I rose, however, with the more boldness, while Varicardville muttered to himself, "the Spaniard will carry the day." I resolved however that this prognostication

should not be wholly fulfilled, if I could help it; and addressing Monsieur le Comte, I said, "Your Highness has done me the honour of asking my opinion. There can be now, I believe, but one. War appears to me to be now necessary, not only to your dignity, but to your safety, and whereas I before presumed to recommend inaction, I now think that nothing but activity can ensure us success. For my own part, I am ready to take any post your Highness may think fit to assign me. One of the first things, however, I should conceive, would be to secure the capital; and the next, to complete the levies of troops, so that the regiment be filled to their entire number. Neither of these objects are to be effected without money; and as the Cardinal Infant has promised a considerable sum, and the Minister in his proclamation, gives you credit for having received it, I hope the Marquis de Villa Franca comes prepared to fulfil, at least in part, the expectation held out by his royal principal."

"Most unfortunately," replied the Marquis in very good French, "at the time of my departure, no idea was entertained that the French Government would so precipitate its measures, otherwise his Highness, the Cardinal Infant, would have sent the promised subsidy at the

time, and I know that no one will regret so much as he does, this unavoidable delay."

Varicarville looked at me with a meaning smile; and indeed it was evident enough, as it was afterwards proved by her conduct, that Spain was willing to hurry us into war, without lending us any aid to bring it to a successful termination. I therefore rejoined without hesitation, feeling that the proverbial rashness of youth would excuse some flippancy, and that I could not carry through my plan without—

"Under these circumstances, it seems to me very likely that Spain, our excellent ally, will send both her money and her troops, for probably, before her tardiness has arrived, we shall have struck the blow and gained the battle."

"But what can be done, young Sir?" demanded our French hastily. "Spain will keep her promise to the utmost. On my honour, on my conscience, had I the means of raising any part of the sum in time to be of service, I would myself advance it, notwithstanding the immense loss sustained by the Catalonian rebels."

Many a man's honour and his conscience would be in a very uncomfortable situation if the means of taking them out of pawn were presented to him on a sudden. That consideration,

however, did not induce me to spare Monsieur de Villa Franca, whom I believed, from all I had heard of him, to be as tergiversating a diplomatist as ever the subtle house of Austria had sent forth. I replied, therefore, "If that be the case—and who can doubt the noble Marquis's word?—I think I can furnish the means whereby Monsieur de Villa Franca can fulfil his generous designs, and put it in his power instantly to raise great part of the sum required."

Every one stared, and no one more than the Marquis himself; but rising from the council-table, I whispered to Varicarville to keep the same subject under discussion till I returned; and flying across the courts of the arsenal, I mounted to my own chamber. "Achilles," cried I, as soon as I entered, "the Marquis de Villa Franca is here in the arsenal; are you still resolved to restore him the diamonds?"

"I am resolved to have nothing to do with them myself," replied Achilles, "for since the adventure at Lyons, I find that I had better give up both gold and diamonds, and content myself with simple silver for the rest of my life, if I would not be whipped through the streets, and turned out in a grey gown: but as to giving them back, all I can say is, your sublimity is a great fool, if you do not keep them yourself."

"It will be of more service to me to give them than to keep them," replied I; "but I will not do so without your consent;" and having by this time drawn them out of the valise, I held them out towards him.

"Give them, give them then, in God's name!" cried the little man, shutting his eyes; "but do not let me see them, for their sparkling makes my resolution wax dim. Take them away, Monseigneur! if you love me, take them away. My virtue is no better than that of *Danaë* of old."

I did as he required, and hurried back to the council chamber, where all eyes turned upon me as I entered; and I found that the five minutes of my absence had been wasted on conjectures of what I could mean. "*Monsieur de Villa Franea*," said I, as soon as I had taken my seat, "you said, I think, that if you had any means of raising even a part of the sum required, in time to be of service, you would advance it yourself, upon your honour and conscience. Now it so happened, that a person with whom I am acquainted, was at Barcelona when your house was plundered, and in that city bought this string of diamonds, which were said to have belonged to you," and I held them up glittering in the light, while the eyes of the Marquis seemed to sparkle in rivalry. "He gave them to me," I proceeded;

“and I am willing to return them to you, upon condition that you instantly pledge them to three quarters of their value, to the jewellers of this city; the money arising therefrom to be poured into the treasury of Monsieur le Comte; and you shall also give farther an hundred pistoles to the person who saved them from the hands of the rabble of Barcelona, he being a poor and needy man.”

The proposal was received with loud applause by every one, except the Marquis de Villa Franca, whose face grew darker and darker at every word I spoke. “This is very hard!” said he, with the most evident design in the world to retreat from his proposal. “Those diamonds are family jewels of inestimable value to me.”

“They are nevertheless diamonds which you shall never see again,” replied I, “except upon the conditions which I mention. Nor do I see that it is hard. Monsieur le Comte will give you an acknowledgment for so much as they produce, as a part of the subsidy from Spain, advanced by you. Upon the sight of that, your own Prince will repay you, deducting that sum from the amount which he is about to transmit to Monsieur le Comte.”

“Monsieur de l’Orme’s observation is just,”

said the Duke of Bouillon. "You expressed the most decided conviction, Monsieur le Marquis, that his Royal Highness would instantly send us the subsidy; if so, the Count de Soissons' acknowledgment will be as good as a bill of exchange upon your own Prince."

"But the proverb says," replied the Marquis, "put not your faith in Princes."

"It should have said, put not your faith in Marquises," rejoined I, somewhat indignant at his attempts at evasion. "However, Monsieur le Marquis, the matter stands thus: If you consent to what I propose, we will send for the jewellers, the sum shall be paid, and you shall have the Count's acknowledgment; then, if you can get the money from your Prince, you have the means of regaining the diamonds, with the sole loss of a hundred pistoles. If your Prince did not intend to pay the subsidy, and you were not quite convinced that he would pay it, you should not have promised it here, in his name, and backed it with your most solemn assurances of your own conviction on the subject. At all events, whether he pays it or not, you are no worse than when you thought the diamonds were irretrievably lost; but so far the better, that you have had an opportunity of showing how

*willingly* you perform what you pledged your honour and conscience you would do if you had the means."

A slight laugh that ran round the council-table at this last sentence, I believe, determined Monsieur de Villa Franca to yield without any more resistance, seeing very well, at the same time, that the only existing chance of recovering his diamonds at all, was to consent to what I proposed.

He felt well convinced, I am sure, that the Cardinal Infant had not the slightest intention in the world of paying the sum which he had promised; but, however, he had a better chance of obtaining his part thereof, than any one else; and therefore, as there was no other means of insuring that his beloved brilliants would not be scattered over half the habitable globe before six weeks were over, he signified his assent to their being deposited with the jewellers of Sedan, in a tone of resignation worthy of a martyr.

The syndick of the jewellers, with two or three of his most reputable companions, were instantly sent for by the council; and during the absence of the messengers, a variety of particulars were discussed, and various plans were adopted for the purpose of commencing the war

with vigour, and carrying it on with success. Amongst other things, the Prince announced his intention of entrusting all the steps preparatory to a general rising of the people of the capital, to De Retz and myself; and though I thought that there were one or two dissatisfied looks manifested upon the subject, no one judged fit to object. Probably, weighing the risk with the honour, they were quite as much pleased to be excused the Count's enterprise, as discontented at not having been distinguished by his selection.

At length the jewellers were brought before the council; and by their lugubrious looks it was evident that the worthy citizens of Sedan expected their noble and considerate Prince to wring from them a heavy subsidy. Their brows cleared, however, when the diamonds were laid before them, and their opinion of the value was demanded; and after some consultation they named a hundred and fifty thousand crowns as a fair price.

The farther arrangements were soon made; the merchants willingly agreeing to advance a hundred thousand crowns, upon the deposit of the jewels, before the next morning. As soon as this was concluded, the Marquis de Villa Franca drew forth his purse, and counting out

a hundred pistoles, he pushed them across the table towards me, saying with a sneering smile, "I suppose, though your modesty has led you, Sir, to put the good deed upon another, it is in fact yourself whom I have to thank for so generously saving my diamonds, amongst the plundering banditti of Barcelona."

The blood for an instant rushed up to my cheek, but it needed no long deliberation to show me, that anger was but folly on such an occasion; and I therefore replied, with a smile, "Your pardon, most noble Sir! the person who with his own right hand captured your diamonds, is a much more tremendous person than myself, so much so, that his enormous size and chivalrous prowess have obtained for him the name of Achilles. I will instantly send for him, and you shall pay him the money yourself, when you will perceive, that had he been inclined to keep your jewels with a strong hand, it would have been difficult to have wrung them from him."

Achilles was brought in a minute; and when I presented the diminutive, insignificant, little man to the Marquis, as the wonderful Achilles le Franc, who had by the vigour of his invincible arm taken his diamonds, the whole council

burst into a laugh, in which no one joined more heartily than Villa Franca himself.

Achilles received his pistoles with great glee, and I believe valued them more than the diamonds themselves.

After this, it being late, the council broke up, and the Prince retired to his own apartments, desiring to speak with De Retz and myself, as he wished us to set out early the next morning for Paris.

When in his own chamber, he gave me an order for ten thousand crowns, half of which he directed me to apply to his service amongst the highly respectable persons to whom my mission was directed, and the other half he bade me accept, as a half year's salary advanced upon the appointments of a gentleman of his bed-chamber. It fortunately happened, that the order directed his treasurer to pay the money out of sums already in his hands; for I own that I should have entertained some scruple in accepting the part destined for myself, if it had been derived from the store of crowns which I had wrung out of the Marquis de Villa Franca's diamonds. As it was, necessity put all hesitation out of the question.

The Count had still a thousand cautions and

directions to give, both to myself and Monsieur de Retz, the only one of which necessary to allude to here, was his desire that, while I remained in Paris, I should inhabit the Hotel de Soissons. This plan of proceeding was suggested by De Retz, who laid it down as a maxim, that the sure means of concealing one's actions, was to act as nobody else would have done. To insure me a kind reception, and full confidence from his mother, the Count wrote her a short note, couched in such terms as would make her comprehend his meaning without leading to any discovery, should it fall into the hands of others. After this, we took our leave and left him to repose, retiring ourselves to make preparations for our journey in the morning.

## CHAPTER VIII.

DAY had scarcely dawned, when Monsieur de Retz and myself mounted our horses in the court-yard of the citadel, and set out on our return to Paris. We were accompanied by but one servant each; for the decided part which the Minister had taken, left no doubt that all the avenues to Sedan would be watched with unslumbering vigilance.

After a short discussion, it was determined that we should not attempt the direct road; and therefore, instead of crossing the bridge of Sedan, we followed the course of the Meuse for some way. At a village however, about two miles from the city, we learned that the passages of the rivers were guarded, and De Retz proposed to return to Sedan and cross by the bridge. My opinion, however, was different. Where we then stood, the river was

narrow and not very rapid, our horses fresh and strong, so that it appeared to me much more advisable to attempt the passage there, than by riding up and down the bank to call attention to our proceedings. The only objection arose with little Achilles, who had a mortal aversion to being drowned, and declared that he could not, and that he would not, swim his horse over. I decided the matter for him, however; for at a moment when he had approached close to the bank, to contemplate more nearly the horrible feat that was proposed to him, I seized his horse by the bridle, and spurring in, was soon half-way across, leading him after me. His terror and distress, when he began to feel the buoyant motion of a horse in swimming, were beyond description; but as there was no resource, he behaved more wisely than terrified people generally do, and sitting quite still, let his fate take its course.

Cutting across the country, sometimes over fields, sometimes through small bridle paths and by-roads, we at length entered the highway, at a point where suspicion, had she been inclined to exercise her ingenuity upon us, might have imagined that we had come from a thousand other places, with fully as great likelihood as Sedan; for the road, a little

higher up, branched into five others, each of which conducted in a different direction.

Our journey now passed tranquilly, and on the evening of the third day we arrived at Paris. It was too late to present myself to the Countess de Soissons that night ; and Monsieur de Retz offering me an apartment in his hotel, I accepted it for the time, not ill pleased to see as much as possible of the extraordinary man into whose society I had been thrown, and commenting upon his character fully as much as he did in all probability upon mine.

On our journey we had laughed over the circumstances of our former meeting ; but I found that he still entertained great doubts of my discretion, by the frequent warnings he gave me not to communicate any thing I had seen at Sedan to the Countess de Soissons.

“ It is a good general rule,” said he, “ never to tell a woman the truth, in any circumstances. Praise her faults, abuse her enemies, humour her weakness, gratify her vanity, but never, never, tell her the truth. One’s deportment with a woman ought to be like a deep lake, reflecting every thing, but letting no one see the bottom.”

Monsieur de Retz’s policy was not always exactly to my taste ; but as the Count de Sois-

sons had not bid me to communicate any of his affairs to his mother, I resolved of course to keep them as secret from her as from any other person."

As soon as I imagined that such a visit would be acceptable on the subsequent morning, I proceeded on horseback to the Hotel de Soissons, wearing, for the first time, my fine Spanish dress of white silk, De Retz having warned me, that in all points of ceremony, the Countess de Soissons showed no lenity to offenders. To make the suit at all harmonize with a ride on horseback, I was obliged to add a pair of white leather buskins to the rest; but, as this was quite the mode of the day, Monsieur de Retz declared my apparel exquisite; and, being himself not a little of a *petit-maitre*, notwithstanding both his philosophy and his cloth, he looked with a deep sigh at his black *soutane*, which he had resumed since our arrival at Paris, and declared that he had no small mind to cast away the gown, and draw the sword himself.

With a smile at human inconsistency, I left him, and rode away; and passing by my old auberge, in the Rue des Prouvaires, soon reached the Hotel de Soissons. Here I delivered the Count's note of introduction to a servant, bidding him present it to the Princess,

and inform her that the gentleman to whom it referred waited her pleasure.

I was not kept long in attendance. In a few minutes the servant returned, and bade me follow him to the apartments of the Countess. We mounted the grand staircase, and proceeding through a suite of splendid rooms, the windows of which were almost all composed of stained glass, bearing the cyphers C. S. and C. N. interlaced, for Charles de Soissons and Catherine de Navarre, we at length reached the chamber in which the Princess was seated with her women.

She was working at an embroidery frame, while a pretty girl of about sixteen stood beside her, holding the various silks of which she was making use. On my being announced, she raised her head, showing a face in which the wreck of many beauties might still be traced, and fixed her eyes somewhat sternly upon me; first letting them rest upon my face, and then glancing over my whole person with a grave and dissatisfied air.

"You come here, young Sir," said she at length, "dressed like a bridegroom; but you will go away like a mourner. Your mother is dead!"

God of Heaven! till that moment, I had not

an idea that, on the earth, there was a being so unfeeling as thus to communicate to a son, that the tie between him and the author of his being was riven by the hand of Death !

And yet the Countess de Soissons acted not from unfeeling motives ; she fancied me guilty of follies that, in her eyes, were crimes, and she thought, by the terrible blow that she struck, at once to reprove and reclaim me.

At first I did not comprehend—I could not, I would not believe that she spoke truly : when seeing my doubts in the vacancy of my expression, she calmly repeated what she had said.

What change took place then in my countenance I know not ; but, however, it was sufficient to alarm her for the consequences of what she had done, and starting up, she called loudly to her women to bring water—wine—any thing to relieve me. To imagine what I felt, will not be easy for any other, even when it is remembered how I loved the parent I had lost,—how I had left her,—how deeply she had loved me, and how suddenly, how unexpectedly I heard that the whole was at an end, and that the cold grave lay between us for ever. My agitation was so extreme, that totally forgetting the presence of the Princess, I cast myself into a chair

and covering my face with my hands, remained speechless and motionless for nearly a quarter of an hour.

During this time, the Countess de Soissons, passing from one extreme to the other, did every thing she could to soothe and calm me ; and, had I been her own son, she could not for the time have shown me more kindness. She was frightened, I believe, at the state into which she had thrown me, and was still endeavouring to make me speak, when a tall, venerable, old man entered the chamber, but paused, I believe, on seeing the confusion that reigned within. She instantly called him to her assistance, telling him what she had done, and pointing out the consequences it had had upon me. He approached, and after feeling my pulse, drew forth a lancet, and calling for a basin, bled me profusely.

“ You have done wrong, my daughter,” said he, turning to the Countess with an air of authority, which she bore more meekly than might have been expected. “ Mildness wins hearts, while unkindness can but break them. Leave me with this young gentleman, and I doubt not soon to restore him to himself.”

The Countess did as he bade her, without reply ; and desiring her women to bring her

embroidery frame, she left the apartment. The bleeding had instantly relieved me. Every drop that flowed had seemed so much taken from an oppressive load that overburdened my heart; and when the old man sat down by me and asked if I was better, I could answer him in the affirmative, and thank him for his assistance.

“ I will not attempt to console you, my son,” he proceeded, “ for you have met with a deep and irreparable loss. From all I hear, your mother was one of the best and most amiable of women; and through a long life, we meet with so very few on whom our hearts can fix, that every time Death numbers one of them for his own, he leaves a deep and irremediable wound with us, that none but Time can assuage, and Time himself ought never wholly to heal. I know too, at the moment when we find that Fate has put its immoveable barrier between us and those we loved,—when the cold small portal of the grave is shut against our communion with our friends,—I know that it is then that every pain we have given them is visited with double anguish upon our own hearts, and a crowd of bitter, unavailing regrets fill every way of memory with dark and horrible forms.”

I wept bitterly, for he had touched a chord

to which my feelings vibrated but too sensitively. "In the gaieties of life," he proceeded, "in the pleasures of society, in the passions, the interests, the desires of human existence and of our earthly nature, we often forget those finer feelings—those better, brighter, nobler sentiments, which belong to the soul alone. Nor is it till *irretrievable* is stamped upon our actions, that we truly feel where we have been wanting in duty, in gratitude, in affection; but when we do feel it, we ought to have a care not to let those regrets pass away in vain tears and ineffectual sorrow, thus wasting the most blessed remedy that Heaven has given to the diseases of the soul. On the contrary, we should apply them to our future conduct, and by gathering instruction from the past, and improvement from remorse, should find in the chastisement of Heaven the blessing it was intended to be."

As I recovered from the first shock of the tidings I had just heard, I had time to consider more particularly the person who spoke to me. As I have said, he was an old man; and, from the perfect silver of his hair and beard, I should have supposed him above seventy; but the erectness of his carriage, the whiteness of his teeth, and the pure undimmed fire of his eye, took much from his look of age. His dress,

though it consisted of a long black robe, was certainly not clerical; and from the skill with which he had bled me, I was rather inclined to suppose that his profession tended more towards the cure of bodies, than of souls.

In reply to his mild homily, which appeared to me, notwithstanding the gentleness of his language, to point at greater errors than any I could charge myself with towards the parent I had lost, I could only answer, that it was hardly possible for a being made up of human weakness to be so continually brought in connection with another, as a son must be with a mother, without falling into some faults towards her; but that even now, when memory and affection joined to magnify all I had done amiss in regard to the dead, I could recall no instance in which I had intentionally given her pain.

An explanation ensued; and I found that my mother, when on her death-bed, had written to the Countess de Soissons, informing her of my disappearance from Bigorre, and attributing it to love for the daughter of a roturier in the vicinity, who had also quitted the province shortly after. She gave no name and no description; but she begged the Countess de Soissons to cause search to be made for me in Paris, and to endeavour to rescue me from the

debasing connection into which, she said, the blood of Bigorre should have held me from ever entering.

"It is under these circumstances," proceeded the old man, "that the Princess addressed you this morning with the abrupt news of your mother's death, hoping by the remorse which that news would occasion, to win you at once from the unhappy entanglement into which you have fallen."

"That the Countess de Soissons should be mistaken," replied I, "does not surprise me, for she did not know me; but that my mother should suppose any passion, whether worthy or unworthy, would have led me to inflict so much pain upon her, and on my father, as my unexplained absence must have done, does astonish and afflict me. Indeed, though my own death might have been the consequence of my stay, I was weak to fly as I did; nor should I have done so, had my mind been in a state to judge sanely of my own conduct. Will you, Sir, have the goodness to inform the Countess de Soissons that the suspicions of my mother were entirely unfounded, and that I neither fled with any one, nor for the purpose of meeting any one, as she must evidently see, from my having found and attached myself to Monsieur

le Comte. My absence, Sir, was occasioned by my having accidentally slain one of my fellow-creatures, and my having no means of proving that I did so accidentally."

"It has been a most unhappy mistake," replied the old man, "for undoubtedly it has been this idea that wounded your mother to the heart. But I hurt you; do not let me do so. If it has been a mistake, you are no way answerable for it. I now go to give your message to the Countess, and will bring you a few lines addressed to you from your mother, but which, you must remember, were written under erroneous feelings.

Thus saying, he left me; and in a few minutes returned with the letter he had mentioned. "The Countess," said he, "is most deeply grieved at the mistake which has arisen, and especially at having by her abruptness aggravated the grief which you cannot but most poignantly feel. This is the letter I spake of; but you had better read it in private. If you will follow me, I will conduct you to an apartment, which, while you remain at the Hotel de Soissons, the Countess begs you would look upon as your own."

I followed him in silence to a splendid suite of rooms, wherein he left me; and I had now time to indulge in all the painful thoughts to

which the irreparable loss I had sustained gave rise. For some time I did not open my mother's letter, letting my thoughts wander through the field of the past, and recalling with agonizing exactness every bright quality of the mind, and every gentle feeling of the heart now laid in the dust. Her love for me rose up as in judgment against me, and I felt that I had never known how much I loved her, till death had rendered that love in vain. Memory, so still, so silent, so faithless, in the hurry of passion, and the pursuit of pleasure, now raised her voice, and with painful care traced all that I had lost. A thousand minute traits,—a thousand kind and considerate actions,—a thousand touches of generosity, of feeling, of tenderness,—every word, every look of many long years of affection, passed in review before me ; and sad, sad was the vision, when I thought that it was all gone for ever. Any thing was better than that contemplation ; and with an aching heart, I opened the letter. The wavering and irregular lines, traced while life still maintained a faint struggle against death ; the mark of a tear, given to the long painful adieu, first caught my eye and wrung my very heart, even before I read what follows.

“We shall never meet again!” she wrote.

“Life, my son, and hope, as far as it belongs to this earth, have fled; and I have nothing to think of in the world I am leaving, but your happiness and that of your father. I write not to reproach you, Louis, but I write to warn and to entreat you not to disgrace a long line of illustrious ancestors, by a marriage, which, depend upon it, will be as unhappy in the end, as it is degrading in itself. This is my last wish, my last command, my last entreaty. Observe it, as you would merit the blessing which I send you. Adieu, my son, adieu!—You may meet with many to cherish, with many to love you, —but, oh! the love of a mother is far above any other that binds being to being on this earth. Adieu! once more, adieu!—It is perhaps a weakness, and yet I cannot help thinking that, even after this hand is dust, my spirit might know, and feel consoled, if my son came to shed a tear on the stone that shall cover the ashes of his mother.”

Every word found its way to my heart; and reverting to what I had seen on the night previous to my departure from Sedan, I fancied that my ~~mother's~~ mother's spirit had itself come to enforce her dying words; and, yielding to the feelings of the moment, I mentally promised to obey her to the very utmost. Nay, more! with a

superstitious idea that her eye could look upon me even then, I kneeled and declared, with as much fervency as ever vow was offered to Heaven itself, that I would follow her will ; and, as soon as the enterprise to which my honour bound me was at an end, would visit her tomb, and pay that tribute to her memory which she had herself desired. Then casting myself into a seat, I leaned my head upon my hands, and gave full rein to every painful reflection.

Let me pass over two days which I spent entirely in the chamber that had been allotted to me. During that time, every attention was paid to me by the servants of the Countess de Soissons ; and the old man, whom I have before mentioned, visited me more than once, every time I saw him gaining upon my good opinion, by the kind and judicious manner in which he endeavoured to soothe and console, without either blaming or opposing my grief. Still, no word that fell from him gave me the least intimation in regard to the character in which he acted in the Hotel de Soissons, though, from the evident influence he possessed over the Countess, it was one of no small authority. From him, however, I learned that my father had written briefly to the Countess de Soissons, informing her of my mother's death. To me he had not

written ; and, though I could easily conceive from his habits and character, that he had shrunk from a task so painful in itself, yet I could not help imagining that displeasure had some part in his silence.

On the evening of the second day, I received a visit from De Retz, who, notwithstanding all that had happened, used every argument to stimulate me to action ; and, in truth, I felt that in my own griefs I was neglecting the interest of the Prince. I accordingly promised him that the next day I would exert myself as he wished ; and, after conversing for some time on the affairs of the Count, I described to him the old man I had met with, and asked him if he knew him.

“ Slightly,” he replied. “ He is an Italian by birth, and his name Vanoni, a man of infinite talent and profound learning ; but his name is not in very good odour amongst our more rigid ecclesiastics, because he is reported to dive a little into those sciences which they hold as sacrilegious. He is known to be an excellent astronomer, and some people will have it, astrologer also ; though, I should suppose, he has too much of real and substantial knowledge, to esteem very highly that which is in all probability imaginary. Have you not remarked,

that there are fully more vulgar minds in the higher classes, than there are elevated ones in the lower? Well, the vulgar part of our *noblesse* call Signor Vanoni the Countess de Soisson's necromancer, though I believe the highest degree to which he can pretend in the occult sciences is that of astrologer; and even that he keeps so profoundly concealed, that their best proof of it hardly amounts to suspicion."

After De Retz had left me, being resolved at all events to waste no more time, every instant of which was precious in such enterprises as that of Monsieur le Comte, I desired Achilles to find me out the archer who had so well aided him in recovering my ring, and to bring him to me early the next morning.

This he accordingly executed; and, at my breakfast, which was served in my own apartments, my little attendant presented to me a tall, solemn personage, who looked wise enough to have passed for a fool, had it not been for a certain twinkling spirit, that every now and then peeped out at the corner of his eye, and seemed to say, that the obtuseness of his deportment was but a mask to hide the acuter mind within. I made these observations while I amused him for a moment or two in empty

conversation, till I could find an opportunity of dismissing two lackeys of the Countess, who had orders to wait upon me at my meals; and by what I perceived, I judged that it would be a difficult matter to conceal my own purposes from such a person, while I drew from him what information I required.

I resolved however to attempt it, and consequently, when the servants were gone, I turned to the subject of my ring; and saying that I really thought he had been insufficiently paid for the talent and activity he had shown upon the occasion, I begged his acceptance of a gold piece.

The man looked in my face with a dead flat stupidity of aspect, which completely covered all his thoughts; but at the same time I very well divined that he did not in the least attribute the piece of gold to the affair of the ring. He followed the sure policy, however, of closing his hand upon the money, making me a low bow, with that most uncommitting sentence, "Monsieur is very good."

"I suppose," proceeded I, "that the strange fact of *pipeurs*, swindlers, swash bucklers, and bravoës of all descriptions, continually evading the pursuit of dame Justice, notwithstanding her having such acute servants as yourself, is

more to be attributed to your humanity, than to your ignorance of their secrets."

This was put half as a question, half as a position, but in such a way as evidently to show that it led to something else. An intelligent gleam sparkled in the corner of the archer's eye, and I fancied that some information concerning the worthy fraternity I inquired after, was about to follow; but he suddenly gave a glance towards Achilles; and, resuming his look of stolidity, replied, "Monsieur is very good."

"Go to Monsieur de Retz, Achilles," said I, "and tell him, that if it suits his convenience, I will be with him in an hour." Achilles was not slow in taking the hint; and when he was gone, I proceeded, spreading out upon the table some ten pieces of gold. "About these swash bucklers," said I, "I am informed they are a large fraternity."

"Vast!" replied the archer, in a more communicative tone.

"And pray where do they principally dwell?" demanded I.

"In every part of Paris," said the archer, looking up in my face, "from the Place Royale, to the darkest nook of the Fauxbourg St. Antoine. But it is dangerous for a gentleman to venture amongst them."

I saw he began to wax communicative, and I pushed a piece of gold across the table to confirm his good disposition. The gold disappeared, and the archer went on. "I would not advise you to venture among them, Monseigneur: but if you would tell me what sort of men you want, doubtless I could find them for you, and I can keep counsel."

"Why, my good friend," replied I, "I did not exactly say that I wanted any men; but if you will call me over the names and qualities of two or three of your most respectable acquaintances, I will see whether they be such as may suit my service."

The archer paused for a moment, screwing up his eye into a curious air of sharp contemplation; and then suddenly replied, "If I knew what your Lordship wanted them for, I could better proportion their abilities."

"For general service, man! for general service!" replied I. "The men I require must obey my word, defend my life, drub my enemies, brawl for my friends, and in no case think of the consequences."

"I understand!" replied the archer,—"*I* understand. There are Jean le Mestre, and Francois le Nain; but I doubt they are too coarse-handed for your purpose. They are fit

for nothing but robbing a travelling jeweller, or frightening an old woman into fits."

"They won't exactly do," replied I, "at least if we can find any others."

"Oh, plenty of others! plenty of others!" said the archer. "Then there are Pierre l'Agneau, and Martin de Chauline. They were once two as sweet youths as ever graced the Place de Grève; but they have been spoiled by bad company. They took service with the Marquis de St. Brie, and such service ruins a man for life."

"I should certainly suppose it did," replied I; "but proceed to some others. We have only heard of four yet."

"Don't be afraid!" said the archer, "I have a long list. Your Lordship would not like a Jesuit—they are devilish cunning—sharp hands! men of action too! I know an excellent Jesuit, who would suit you to a hair in many respects. He is occasionally employed too by Monsieur de Noyers, one of our ministers, and would cheat the Devil himself."

"But as I do not pretend to half the cunning of his infernal Majesty," replied I, "this worthy Jesuit might cheat me too."

"That is very possible," answered the archer. "But stay!" he proceeded thoughtfully.

“ I have got the very men that will do,—You need a bracc, Monseigneur—Of course, you need a brace. There is Combalet de Carignan, one of our most gallant gentlemen, and Jacques Mocqueur, as he is called, because he laughs at every thing. They were both in the secret service of his Eminence the Cardinal ; but they one day did a little business on their own account, which came to his ears ; and he vowed that he would give them a touch of the round bedstead. They knew him to be a man of his word, so they made their escape, till the matter blew by, and now they are living here in Paris on their means.”

“ And pray what is the round bedstead ?” demanded I, “ something unpleasant, doubtless, from its giving such celerity to the motions of your friends ?”

“ Nothing but a certain wheel in the inside of the Bastille,” replied the archer, “ on which a gentleman is suffered to repose himself quietly after all his bones are put out of joint. But as I was saying, these two gallants are just the men for your Lordship’s service : bold, dextrous, cunning ; and they have withal a spice of honour and chivalry about them, which makes them marvellously esteemed amongst their fellows. Will they suit you, Monseigneur ?”

"I think they will," replied I, "but I must see them first."

"Nothing so easy," answered the archer. "I will bring them here at any hour your Lordship pleases to name."

"Not here," replied I; "I must not take too many liberties with the Hotel de Soissons. But I have a lodging in the rue des Prêtres St. Paul, on the left hand going down, the fifth door from the corner, nearly opposite a grocer's shop. Bring them there at dusk to-night, and accept that for your trouble." So saying, I pushed him over two more of the gold pieces; and having once more satisfied himself that he perfectly remembered the direction I had given him, the archer took his leave, and I proceeded to my rendezvous with De Retz.

## CHAPTER IX.

"WELCOME!" said De Retz, as I entered, "most welcome! I am just about to proceed on an expedition wherein your assistance may be necessary. Will you accompany me?"

"Any where you please," I replied, "provided I be back by dusk."

"Long before that," answered De Retz. "I am going to take you to the Bastille."

My surprise made the Abbé explain himself. "You must know," said he, "that there is no actual impossibility of our gaining the Bastille itself for Monsieur le Comte de Soissons, in case his first battle should be so successful as to give fair promise for the ultimate event.—You like frankness," he continued, suddenly interrupting what he was saying, "and I perceive you are already beginning to look surprised that I, who have hitherto shown no great confidence in your discretion, should now let you

into the most dangerous secrets of this enterprise. I will frankly tell you why I do so—it is because I need some one to assist me; and because I judge it more dangerous to risk a secret with two, than to confide it all to one, even should he not be very discreet. But I am also beginning to think more highly of your discretion. It is so bad a plan to let our first impressions become our lords, that I make a point of changing my opinion of a man as often as I can find the least opportunity.”

It was very difficult to know, on all occasions, whether Monsieur de Retz's frankness was spontaneous or assumed. Whichever it was, it always flowed with a view to policy; and I found that the best way in dealing with him was at first but to give to whatever he advanced, that sort of negative credence, which left the mind free to act as circumstances should afterwards confirm or shake its belief. In the present case, I merely thanked him for his improved opinion of me, and begged him to proceed, which he did accordingly.

“The Bastille,” he said, “serves Monsieur le Cardinal de Richelieu for many purposes: but its great utility is, that it disposes of all his enemies one way or another. Those he hates, or those he fears, find there a grave or a prison,

according to the degree of his charitable sentiments towards them. There are, however, many persons whom he fears too much to leave at liberty, yet not enough to condemn them to the rack, the block, or the dungeon. These persons are shut up in one prison or another through the kingdom ; and on their first arrest are treated with some severity, but gradually, as they become regular tenants of the place, the measures against them are relaxed ; and they have, at length, as much liberty as they would have in their own house with the door shut.

“ There are at present four men within the walls of the Bastille, who, having been there for years, are scarcely more watched than the Governor himself. The Duke de Vitry, the Count de Cramail, Marshal Bassompierre, and the Marquis du Fargis. All these are known to me ; and Monsieur du Fargis is my uncle, so that I am very sure of the game that I am playing. The interior discipline of the prison is at present more than ever relaxed, under the present governor, Monsieur du Tremblai ; and his politeness towards his prisoners is such, that one or other of the four gentlemen I have named have every day one of their friends to dine with them, which affords them the greatest consola-

tion under their imprisonment. I have often thus visited the prison ; and about ten days ago, while dining with my uncle, I had an opportunity of hinting to the Count de Cramail, who is the cleverest man of the party, the designs of Monsieur le Comte ; and, at the same time, proposed to him a plan for rendering ourselves masters of the Bastille. He has promised me an answer to-day, when I have engaged myself to dine with Monsieur de Bassompierre ; and the only difficulty is to obtain an opportunity of speaking in private. You doubtless have experienced how troublesome it is sometimes to win a secret moment, even in a saloon ; judge therefore whether it is easy in a prison. You must lend your aid, and engage old Du Tremblai in conversation, while I make the best use of the time you gain for me."

I now very well perceived that De Retz had in a manner been forced to explain himself to me, as there was no other person in Paris acquainted with the designs of the Count de Soissons. I therefore gave him full credit for sincerity, and agreed to do my best to gain him the opportunity desired.

By the time this explanation was given, it approached very near to one of the clock ; and, not to commit such a rudeness as to keep wait-

ing for their dinner a party of prisoners, whose principal earthly amusement must have been to eat, we set out immediately on foot, it being required that we should give as little *éclat* to our visits to the Bastille as possible.

A sort of mixed government then existed within the walls of the prison, being garrisoned with troops as a fortress, and also very well supplied with jailers and turnkeys to fit it for its principal capacity. Thus, though the gate was opened to us by an unarmed porter, a sentinel, iron to the teeth, presented himself in the inner court, and another at every ten steps. However, having, like the knights of the old romances, vanquished all perils of the way, we at length entered into the penetralia, and were ushered into the presence of the Governor.

Monsieur du Tremblai, who died about six months afterwards, was too good a man for his situation: his reception of us was as kind as if we had been guests of his own; and the prisoners whom we went to see appeared to form but a part of his own family.

I was now introduced in form to the friends of Monsieur de Retz: they were all old men; and had, in truth, nothing remarkable in their appearance. Monsieur de Vitry, celebrated in

history as the man who, at the command of Louis the Thirteenth, shot the Maréchal d'Ancre on the very steps of the Louvre, was the only one whose countenance promised any thing like vigour; but it was not to him that De Retz had addressed himself in his present negotiation, but to Monsieur de Cramail, whose face at all events did not prepossess one in favour of his intellect.

We dined; and the Governor seeing me dressed in mourning, and as gloomy in my deportment as my garments, luckily applied himself to console me, with so much application, that Monsieur de Cramail had an opportunity of speaking a few words to De Retz in private, even during dinner, while Monsieur du Tremblai endeavoured to solace me with *alose à la martinette*, and to drive out the demon sorrow with *pieds de cochons à la St. Menéhoulde*.

During the meal, De Retz took occasion to vaunt my skill at all games of cards, though, Heaven knows, he could not tell, when he did so, whether I could distinguish basset from lansquenet; but taking this for a hint, when the old Governor asked me, after dinner, to make one of three at ombre, I did not refuse; and as soon as we were seated, the Abbé, with Mon-

sieur de Cramail, went out to walk upon the terrace, while Messieurs De Vitry and du Fargis remained to look on upon our game.

Thinking to engage the Governor to go on with me, I let him win a few pieces, though he played execrably ill: but I thus fell into the common mistake of being too shrewd for my own purpose. Had I judged sanely of human nature, I should have won his money, and he would have gone on to a certainty, to win it back. As it was, after gaining a few crowns, he resigned the cards, and asked if I would join the gentlemen on the terrace.

There was no way of detaining him; and therefore, after making what diversion I could, I followed to the spot where De Retz and Monsieur de Cramail were enjoying an unobserved *tête-à-tête*. As we came up, I saw that the latter had a paper in his hand, which he was evidently about to give to De Retz. The moment, however, we appeared on the terrace, he paused and withdrew it. The paper I knew might be of consequence; but how to take off the eyes of the Governor, was the question. I praised the view, hoping he would turn to look, in his astonishment — for nothing was to be seen but the smoky chimneys of the Fauxbourg St. Antoine.

But the Governor only replied, "Yes, very fine," and walked on.

I now saw that I must hazard a bold stroke; and quietly insinuating the point of my sword between the Governor's legs, which was the more easy, as he somewhat waddled in his walk, I slipped the buckle of my belt; the sword fell, and the Governor over it. I tumbled over him; and while the paper was given, received, and concealed, I picked him up, begged his pardon, and brushed the dust off his coat; after which we passed a quarter of an hour in mutually bowing and making excuses.

De Retz then took leave, and as soon as we were once more in the street, I left him to peruse the paper he had received at leisure, and hurried away to my lodging, in the rue des Prêtres St. Paul, to prepare for the reception of my archer and his recruits. In going to the Bastille with De Retz, I fancied that I saw a man suddenly turn round and follow us; and on my return, I evidently perceived that I was watched. Whatever was the object, it did not at all suit me that any one should spy my actions; and therefore, after various hare-like doublings, I turned down the rue des Minims, got into the Place Royale, and gliding under

the dark side of the arcades, made my escape by the other end, and gradually worked my way up to my lodging. My good landlady was somewhat surprised to see me, but I found my apartments prepared, and in order; and, sending for a couple of flagons of good Burgundy, I waited the arrival of my new attendants.

I found that punctuality was amongst their list of qualifications; for no sooner did twilight fall, than the archer made his appearance, followed by two very respectable-looking personages, whom he introduced to me severally as Combalet de Carignan, and Jacques Mocqueur. The first was a tall, well-dressed gallant, ruffling gaily, with feathers and ribbons in profusion, a steady, nonchalant, daring eye, and a leg and arm like a Hercules. The face of the second, Jacques Mocqueur, was not unknown to me; and memory hastily running back through the past, found and brought before me in a minute the figure of one of those worthy sergeants who had come to examine my valise on my first arrival at Paris. He was the one who had shown some valour, and had ventured a pass or two with me, after his companion had been ejected by the window.

I instantly claimed acquaintance with him,

which he as readily admitted; saying with a grin, that the circumstances under which we had last met would, he hoped, be quite sufficient to establish his character in my opinion, and show that he was well fitted for my service. Whatever reply he expected, I answered in the affirmative; and Combalet de Carignan, finding that his friend's acquaintance with me turned out advantageously, would fain have proved himself an old friend of mine also. Jacques Mocqueur, however, cut him short, exclaiming "No, no! you were not of the party; and you just as much remember Monseigneur's face, as I do the high-priest of the Jews."

"Why, I have *done* so many sweet youths lately," replied the other, "and broken so many heads, that I grow a strange confounder of faces."

"Ay! If you had been with us that day," answered Jacques Mocqueur, "you would have had your own head broken. Why, Monseigneur made short work with us. He pitched Captain Von Crack out of the window like an empty oyster-shell, and pricked me a hole in my shoulder before either of us knew on what ground we were standing;" and he made me a low bow, to send his compliment home up to the hilt.

"To proceed to business," said I, after I had invited my companions to taste the contents of

the flagons, which they did with truly generous rivalry. "Let me hear what wages you two gentlemen require for entering into my service."

"That depends upon two things," replied Combalet de Carignan: "what sort of service your Lordship demands, and what power you have to protect us in executing it. Simple brawling for you, cheating, pimping, lying, swearing, thrashing or being thrashed, fighting on your part, steel to steel, and any other thing in the way of reason, we are ready to undertake: but murder, assassination, and highway robbery, are out of our way of business. I have been employed in the service of the State, am come of a good family, am well born and well educated, and would rather starve than do any thing mean or dishonourable."

"Nothing of the kind shall be demanded of you," replied I, "and the worst you shall risk in my service shall be hard blows."

"That is nothing," replied Jacques Mocqueur. "Combalet does not fear even a little hanging, but he dreads having a hotter place in the other world than his friends and companions. But for general service, such as your Lordship demands, we cannot have less than sixty crowns a month each."

To this I made no opposition, and a written

agreement was drawn out between us, in the following authentic form.

“We, Combalet de Carignan, and Jacques dit Mocqueur, hereby take service with Monsieur le Comte de l'Orme, promising to serve him faithfully in all his commands, provided they be not such as may put us in danger of the great carving-knife, the road to Heaven, or the round bedstead. We declare his enemies our enemies, and his friends our friends; all for the consideration of sixty crowns per month, to be paid to each of us by the said Count de l'Orme, together with his aid and protection in all cases of danger and difficulty, as well as food and maintenance in health, and surgical assistance, in case of our becoming either sick or wounded in his service.”

In addition to the above, I stipulated that my two new retainers were to abandon all other business than mine; and though they might lie as much as they pleased to any one else, that they should uniformly tell me the truth.

At this last proposal, Jacques Mocqueur burst into a fit of laughter; and Combalet de Carignan hesitated and stammered most desperately. “You must know, Monseigneur,” said he at length, “that my friend Jacques and I have established a high character amongst our brethren, by never promising any thing without perform-

ing it. Now, every thing that we say we will do for your Lordship, be sure that it shall be done, even to our own detriment; but as to telling you the truth, I can't undertake it. I never told the truth in my life, except in regard to promises; and I own I should not know how to begin. It is my infirmity lying, and I cannot get over it. Jacques Mocqueur can tell the truth. Oh, I have known him tell the truth very often; but really, Monseigneur, you must excuse *me*."

"Well then, Monsieur Combalet," said I, "your friend Jacques shall tell me the truth; and when you lie to me, he shall correct you; and I will set it down to your infirmity."

"Agreed, Monseigneur, agreed," replied the other, "I am quite willing that you should know the truth. I do not lie to deceive. It proceeds solely from an exuberant and poetical imagination. But allow me to request one thing, which is, that you would call me De Carignan. I am somewhat tenacious in regard to my family; for you must know that I am descended from the illustrious house of Carignan of ———"

"The infirmity! the infirmity!" exclaimed Jacques Mocqueur. "His mother was a lady

of pleasure in the rue des Hurleurs, and his father was a footman."

The bravo turned with a furious air upon his companion, but Jacques Mocqueur only laughed, and assured me that what he said was true.

All preliminaries were now definitively settled, and giving the archer another piece of gold, I hinted to him that he might leave me alone with my new attendants. This was no sooner done, than I proceeded to my more immediate object. "You think doubtless, my men," said I, "that I am about to employ you, as you have hitherto been employed, in any of those little services which require men devoid of prejudice, and not over-burthened with morality; but you are mistaken. In the enterprise for which I destine you, you will stand side by side with the best and noblest of the land. If we fail, we will all lay our bones together; if we succeed, your reward is sure, and a nobler career is open to you than that which you have hitherto followed."

My two recruits looked at each other in some surprise. "He means a buccaneering!" said Combalet to his companion.

"Fie! no," replied Jacques Mocqueur, after a moment's thought. "He means a conspiracy, because he talks about its being a nobler career."

Folks always call their conspiracies noble, though lawyers call it treason. However, Monseigneur, if it is any thing against our late Lord and Master, his most devilish Eminence of Richelieu, we are your men, for we both owe him a deep grudge, and we make it a point of honour to pay our debts. But who are we to fight for, and who against ?

“ Hold, hold, my friend,” replied I, “ you are running forward somewhat too fast. Remember, that you are speaking to your lord, whom you have bound yourself to serve ; and you must obey his commands, without inquiring why or wherefore.”

“ Ay !” answered Combalet, “ so long as they do not make us put our heads under the great carving-knife ; but when your Lordship talks about conspiracies ——”

“ Who talks about conspiracies ?” I have, cried I, finding that my horses were showing signs of restiveness—“ who talks of conspiracies ? You have nothing to do but receive my commands ; and when I propose any thing to you that brings you within the danger of the law, then make your objection.—But to the point,” proceeded I, “ I am told, and indeed know from the best authority, that all the persons exercising your honourable profession in any of its

branches, form as it were a sort of club or society, which is governed by its own laws to a certain degree; and I am moreover informed that you have a certain place of meeting, where the elders of your body assemble, called Swash Castle, or Chateau Escroc, where you have a chief magistrate, named King of the Huns. Is not this the fact?"

I had gained my information from various sources, but greatly from my little attendant Achilles, who had an especial talent for finding out things concealed. My knowledge of their secrets, however, had a great effect upon my two attendants, who began to think, I believe, that either as a professor or an amateur, I had at some former time exercised their honourable trade myself.

"There is no denying it, Sir," replied Jacques Mocqueur at length; "We are a regular corporation. So much I may say, for you know it already; but ask me no farther, for we are bound by something tighter than an oath, not to reveal the mysteries of our craft."

"I am going to ask you no questions," replied I firmly; "but I am going to command you to take me to your rendezvous, or Swash Castle, and introduce me to your worthy prince, the King of the Huns."

My two respectable followers gazed in each other's eyes with so much wonder and amazement, that I saw I had made a very unusual request ; but I was resolved to carry my point ; and accordingly added, after waiting a few moments for an answer, " Why don't you reply ? Do not waste your time in staring one at the other, for I am determined to go, and nothing shall prevent me."

" Samson was a strong man, Monseigneur," replied Jacques, shaking his head, " but he could not drink out of an empty pitcher. Your Lordship would find it a difficult matter to accomplish your object by yourself ; and though here we stand, willing, according to our agreement, to serve you to the best of our power, yet I do not believe that we can do what you require."

" Mark me, Master Jacques Mocqueur," replied I, " my determination is taken. I came to Paris for the express purpose of treating with your King of the Huns, on matters of deep importance ; and back I will not go without having fulfilled my mission. If, therefore, you and your companion can gain me admittance into your Chateau Escroc by to-morrow night, ten pieces of gold each shall be your reward ; if not, I must find other means for my purpose ; and take care that you put no trick upon

me; for be sure that I will find a time to break every bone in your skin, if you do.—You know I am a man to keep my word.”

“I do! I do! Monseigneur,” replied Jacques Mocqueur, “it cost me a yard and a half of diachylon, the last bout I had with you; and I would not wish to try it again. All I can say is, that we will do our best to gain a royal ordonnance for your Lordship’s admittance; but if you really have made up your mind to go, knowing any thing of what you undertake, you must have a stout heart of your own; that is all that I can say. I have only farther to assure your Lordship, that the more information you can give us of your purpose, the more likely are we to succeed.”

“You may tell his Majesty of the Huns,” replied I, “that I come to him as an ambassador from one prince to treat with another—that he may find his own advantage in seeing me, for that I shall be contented to cast ten golden pieces into his royal treasury, as an earnest of future offerings, on my first visit; and that he need not be in the least fear, as I come unattended, and quite willing to submit to any precautions he may judge necessary.

After a little reflection, my two attendants did not seem to think my enterprise quite so

impracticable as they had at first imagined it. They banded the *pros* and *cons* however, sometime between them, in a jargon which to me was very nearly unintelligible; and at last, once more assuring me that they would do their best, they left me, after having received a piece or two to stimulate their exertions. Before I let them depart, I also took care to enforce the necessity of despatch, and insisted upon it that a definitive answer should be given me by dusk the day after. As soon as Messieurs Combalet de Carignan and Jacques Moequeur were gone, my own steps were turned towards the Hotel de Soissons, and revolving in my own mind the events of the day, I walked on, like most young diplomatists, perfectly self-satisfied with the first steps of my negotiation, even before it showed the least probability of ultimate success.

## CHAPTER X.

SCARCELY had I entered my apartments in the Hotel de Soissons, ere I received a visit from Signor Vanoni, who informed me that the Countess was somewhat offended at my having gone forth without rendering her my first visit of ceremony. "She invites you, however," added the old man, to be present to-night in the observatory of Catherine de Medicis, which you have doubtless remarked from your window, while I endeavour to satisfy her, as far as my poor abilities go, in regard to the future fate of her son, which she imagines may be learned from the stars."

"And do you not hold the same opinion?" demanded I, seeing that Vanoni had some hesitation in admitting his own belief in astrological

science. "I suppose there are at least as many who give full credit to the pretensions of astrologers, as there are who doubt their powers?"

"My own opinion," replied the old man, "signifies little; I certainly must have thought there was some truth in a science, before I made it a profound study, which I have done in regard to astrology. However, if you will do me the honour of following me, I will show you the interior of the magnificent column which Catherine de Medicis constructed, for the purpose of consulting those stars which are now," he added with a smile, "growing as much out of fashion as her own farthingale."

I followed him accordingly, and crossing the gardens, at the end of one of the alleys, came upon that immense stone tower, in the form of a column, which may be seen to the present day, standing behind the Hotel des Fermes. It was night, but beautifully clear and starlight; and, looking up, I could see the tall dark head of that immense pillar, rising like a black giant high above all the buildings around, and I felt that much of the credence which astrologers themselves placed in their own dreams, might well be ascribed to the influence of the solemn and majestic scenes in which their studies were carried on. I understood completely how a

man of an ardent imagination, placed on an eminence like that, far above a dull and drowsy world below, with nothing around him but silence, and no contemplation but the bright and beautiful stars, might dream grand dreams, and fancy that, in the golden lettered book before his eyes, he could read the secret tale of fate, and discovered the immutable decrees of destiny. I did more—I felt that, were I long there myself, I should become a dreamer too, and give rein to imagination as foolishly as any one.

We now entered the tower by a strong door, at which were stationed two small negro pages, each of whom, dressed in the Oriental costume, bore a silver lamp burning with some sort of spirit, which gave a blue unearthly sort of light to whatever they approached. Notwithstanding my own tendency towards imaginativeness—perhaps I might say towards superstition—I could not help smiling to see with what pains people, who wish to give way to their fancy, add every accessory which may tend to deceive themselves. Any thing strange, unusual, or mysterious, is of great assistance to the imagination; and the sight of the two small negroes, with their large rolling eyes and singular dress, together with the purple gleam of the lamps in the gloomy interior of the tower, were all well calculated to

impress the mind with those vague sort of sensations which, themselves partaking of the wild and extraordinary, form a good preparation to ideas and feelings not quite tangible to the calm research of reason.

Vanoni saw me smile, and as we went up the stairs of the tower, he said, "That mummerly is none of mine. The good Countess is resolved not to let her imagination halt for want of aid : but the belief which I give to the science of astrology is founded upon a different principle—the historical certainty that many of the most extraordinary predictions derived from the stars have been verified contrary to all existing probabilities—a certainty as clearly demonstrable as any other fact of history, and much more so than many things to which men give implicit credence. In the search for truth, we must take care to get rid of that worst of prejudices, because the vainest—that of believing nothing but what is within the mere scope of our own knowledge. Now it is as much a matter of history as that Julius Cæsar once lived at Rome, that in this very tower an astrologer predicted to Catherine de Medicis the exact number of years which each of her descendants should reign.—It has been one cause of the disrepute into which the science of astrology has fallen," he added,

“ that its professors mingled a degree of charlatanism with their predictions, which they intended to give them authority, but which has ultimately discredited the art itself. Thus the astrologer I speak of, not contented with predicting what he knew would happen, and leaving the rest to fate, must needs show to the Queen the images of her sons, in what he pretended to be a magic glass; and, by this sort of juggle diminished his own credit; though the *procès verbal* of what Catherine saw, taken down at the time, is now in the hands of the Countess de Soissons.”

“ May I ask the particulars?” said I, growing somewhat interested in the subject; “ and also, whether this *procès verbal* is undoubtedly authentic?”

“ Beyond all question,” replied the old man, leading the way into a circular hall, at the very top of the tower. “ It has descended from hand to hand direct; so that no doubt of its being genuine can possibly exist. What the Queen saw was as follows: being placed opposite a mirror, in this very chamber, after various fantastic ceremonies unworthy of a man of real science, the astrologer called upon the genius of Francis the Second to appear, and make as many turns round the chamber as he should reign years.

“Instantly Catherine beheld a figure, exactly resembling her son, appear in the glass before her, and with a slow and mournful step take one turn round the chamber and begin another; but before it was much more than half completed, he disappeared suddenly; and another figure succeeded, in which she instantly recognised her second son, afterwards Charles the Ninth. He encircled the hall fourteen times, with a quick and irregular pace. After him came Henry the Third, who nearly completed fifteen circles; when suddenly another figure, supposed to be that of the Duke of Guisc, came suddenly before him, and both disappearing together, left the hall void, seemingly intimating to the Queen, that there her posterity should end. There stands the mirror,” he added, “but its powers are gone.”

I approached the large ancient mirror with its carved ebony frame, to which he pointed, and looked into it for a moment, my mind glancing back to the days of Catherine de Medicis and her gay and vicious court; and binding the present to the past, with that fine vague line of associations whose thrilling vibrations form as it were the music of memory; when suddenly, as if the old magician still exercised his power upon his own mirror, the stately form of a lady dressed in long robes of black velvet

rose up before me in the glass; and, with a start which showed how much my imagination was already excited, I turned round and beheld the Countess de Soissons.

Without waiting for the reprimand which, I doubted not, she intended to bestow upon me, I apologized for having been rude enough to go any where without first having paid my respects to herself, alleging business of an important nature as my excuse.

“And pray, what important business can such a great man as yourself have in our poor capital?” demanded the Countess, with a look of haughty scorn, that had well nigh put to flight my whole provision of politeness.

“I believe, Madam,” replied I, after a moment's pause, “that Monsieur le Comte your son informed you by a note which I delivered, that I had come to Paris on affairs which he thought fit to entrust to me.”

“And a pretty personage he chose,” interrupted the Countess. “But I come not here to hear your excuses, youth. Has Signor Vanoni told you the important purpose for which I commanded you to meet me here?”

I replied that he had not done so fully; and she proceeded to inform me, that the learned Italian, having been furnished by her with all the astrological particulars of my birth, which

she had obtained from my mother many years before, and also having received those of the birth of her own son the Count de Soissons, he had chosen that evening for the purpose of consulting the stars concerning our future fate.

It is needless to go through all the proceedings of the astrologer, his prediction being the only interesting part of the ceremony. This he delivered without any affectation or mummercy, as the mere effect of calculations; and his very plainness had something in it much more convincing than any assumption of mystery; for it left me convinced of his own sincere belief in what he stated. I forget the precise terms of his prophecy in regard to the Count de Soissons; suffice it, that was such as it left room for an easy construction to be put upon it, shadowing out what was really the after-fate of the Prince to whom it related. In regard to myself, he informed me that dangers and difficulties awaited me, more fearful and more painful than any I had hitherto encountered; but that with fortitude I should surmount them all; and he added, that if I still lived after one month from that day, my future fate looked clear and smiling. All who sought my life, he said farther, should die by my hand, or fail in their attempt,

and that in marriage I should meet both wealth, and rank, and beauty.

Absurd as I knew the whole system to be, yet I own—Man's weaknesses form perhaps the most instructive part of his history, and therefore it is, I say it—Absurd as I knew the whole system to be, yet I could not help pondering over this latter part of the prediction, and endeavoured to reconcile it in my own mind with the probabilities of the future. My Helen had beauty, I knew too well.—Wealth, I had heard attributed to her; and rank, the Prince had promised to obtain.—Oh man, man! thou art a strange, weak being; and thy boasted reason is but a glorious vanity, which serves thee little till thy passions have left thee, and then conducts thee to a grave!

Hope, in my breast but a drowning swimmer, clung to a straw,—to worse—a bubble.

I followed the Countess de Soissons from the tower, thoughtful and dreamy; and I believe the old man Vanoni was somewhat pleased to witness the effect that his words had wrought upon me; though he could little see the strange and mingled web that fancy and reason were weaving in my breast—the golden threads of the one, though looking as light as a gossamer,

proving fully strong enough to cross the woof of the other, and outshine it in the light of hope.

At the foot of the staircase we found the Countess's women waiting; and having suffered me to conduct her to the door of the Hotel de Soissons, she gave me my dismissal with the same air of insufferable haughtiness, and retired into the house. As my apartments lay in one of the wings, I was again crossing the garden to reach them, when suddenly a figure glided past me, which for a moment rooted me to the ground. It was in vain I accused myself of superstition, of madness, of folly. The belief still remained fixed upon my mind, that I had seen Jean Baptiste Arnault, whom I had shot with my own hand. The moon had just risen — the space before me was clear; and if ever my eyes served me in the world, it was the figure of him I had killed that passed before me.

Without loss of time, I made my way to my own apartments; and pale, haggard, and agitated, I cast myself on a seat, while little Achilles, in no small surprise, gazed on me with open eyes, and asked a thousand times what he could do for me.

"It was he!" muttered I, without taking

any notice of the little man.—“It was certainly Jean Baptiste Arnault, if ever I beheld him.”

“My brother!” exclaimed Achilles; “I thought he was at Lourdes, with that most respectable gentleman his father, my mother’s husband that was; and my parent that ought to have been—I certainly thought he was at Lourdes.”

“He is in the grave, and by my hand,” replied I, scarcely understanding what he had said; but gradually, as I grew calm, my mind took in his meaning, and I exclaimed, “Your brother! Was Jean Baptiste Arnault your brother?”

“That he certainly was, by the mother’s side,” replied the little player, “and as good a soul he was, when a boy, as ever existed.” An explanation of course ensued; and on calling to mind the little man’s history, I found that no great wit would have been necessary to have understood his connection with Arnault before. A more painful narrative followed on my part, for Achilles pressed me upon the words I had let fall. I could not tell him the circumstances of his brother’s death—that would have been too dreadful for my state of mind at the moment; but I assured him that it had been acci-

dental; and I told him the regret, the horror, the grief, which it had occasioned me ever since.

“Poor Jean Baptiste!” cried the little player, with more feeling than I thought he possessed, “he was as good a creature as ever lived; and now, when I hear that he is dead, all his tricks of boyhood, and all the happy hours when we played together, come up upon my mind, and I feel—what perhaps I never felt rightly before,—what a sad thing it is to be an outcast, denied, and forgotten, and alone, without one tie of kindred between me and all the wide world.” And the tears came up into his eyes as he spoke. “Do not let me vex you, Monseigneur,” continued he; “I am sure you would harm no one on purpose; and you have been to me far better than kind and kindred; for you alone, on all the earth, have borne with me, and showed me unfailing kindness; but yet I cannot help regretting poor Jean Baptiste.”

It was a bitter and a painful theme; and we both dropped it as soon as it was possible. Ideas, however, were re-awakened in my mind, that defied sleep; and though I persuaded myself that the figure I had seen was but the effect of an imagination over-excited by what had passed during the day, and the thoughts that

had lately occupied me; yet, as I lay in my bed, all the horrid memories, over which time had begun to exercise some softening power, came up as sharp and fresh as if the blood was still flowing that my hand had shed.

I rose late, and while Achilles was aiding me to dress, I saw that there was something on his mind that he wished to say. At length it broke forth. "I would not for the world speak to you, Monseigneur, on a subject that is so painful," said the little player, with a delicacy of which I had hardly judged him capable; "but this morning something extraordinary has happened, that I think it best to tell you. As I was standing but now at the gate of the Hotel de Soissons, who should pass by but Arnault the old Procureur. He stopped suddenly, and looked at me; and as I thought he knew me, though in all probability I was mistaken, I spoke to him, and we had a long conversation. Me he seemed to care very little about, but he asked me a world of questions about you; and he seemed to know all that you were doing, a great deal better than I did myself. I assured him, however, that the death of poor Jean Baptiste was entirely accidental, as you told me; and I related to him all that you had suffered on that account, and how often, even now, it

would make you as grave and as melancholy as if it were just done. I wanted him very much to tell me where he lived, but he would not; and took himself off directly I asked the question."

It gave me some pain to hear that Achilles had now positively informed Arnault that my hand had slain his son. Helen could never be mine; I felt it but too bitterly, as the dreams which the astrologer's prediction had suggested died away in my bosom—and yet I shrank from the idea of her knowing, that he whom she had loved was the murderer of her brother. I could not however blame Achilles for what he had done. The name of Helen had never been mentioned between us; and when I thought that she was *his* sister—the sister of my own servant, though it changed no feeling in my breast towards her—though it left her individually lovely and excellent and graceful as ever in my eyes, yet it gave new strength to the vow I had made to obey my mother's last injunctions, by adding another to the objections which she would have had to that alliance. The conviction that we were fated never to be united, took firm possession of my mind. Destiny seemed willing to spare me even the pain of faint hopes, by piling up obstacle on obstacle between us; but I re-

solved that, if I might never call her I loved my own, I would give the place which she had filled in my heart to no other. I would live solitary and unbound by those ties which she alone could have rendered delightful. I would pass through life without the touch of kindred or of wedded love, and go down to the grave the last of my race and name

Such were my resolutions ; and, variable and light as my character was in some degree, I believe that I should have kept them—ay ! notwithstanding the quick and ardent blood of youth, and my own proneness to passion and excitement.

In the course of the morning, I visited Monsieur de Retz ; and, according to the commands of Monsieur le Comte, we mutually communicated the steps we had taken—though I believe De Retz informed me of the success which had attended his negotiations, more to force me into a return of confidence than for any other reason.

“ From the letter which Monsieur de Cramail slipped into my hand yesterday,” said he, “ as well as from what he told me *viva voce*, I can now safely say the Bastille is our own. Indeed, it is wonderful with what facility this party of prisoners dispose of their place of confinement ; but the Count tells me here, that he has won

the officers of the garison, and the officers have won the soldiers—that, in short, all hearts are for Monsieur le Comte, and that it only wants a first success to make all hands for him too. Oh, my dear De l'Orme," he burst forth, "what a wonderful thing is that same word success! But once attach it to a man's name, and you shall have all the world kneel to serve him, and laud him to the skies—let him but fail, and the whole pack will be upon him, like a herd of hungry wolves. Give me the man that, while success is doubtful, stands my friend, who views my actions and my worth by their own intrinsic merit, and pins not his faith upon that great impostor success, whose favour or whose frown depends not on ourselves but circumstance."

As soon as it was dusk, I went alone to my little lodging in the rue des Prêtres St. Paul; and, after waiting for about half an hour, received the visit of my two most respectable followers, Combalet and Jacques Mocqueur. As they entered, I saw by a certain smirking air of satisfaction on their countenances, that they had been successful in their negotiation, which they soon informed me was the case.

"We have permission from his most acuminated Majesty of the Huns," said Jacques Moc-

queur, "to introduce Monseigneur le Comte de l'Orme into his famous palace called Chateau Escroc, and to naturalize him a Hun, upon the reasonable condition of his submitting to be blindfolded, as he is conducted through the various passes of the country of the Huns."

"In regard to being blindfolded," replied I, "I have not the least objection, as it is but natural you should take means to prevent your secret resorts from being betrayed: but I must first understand clearly what you mean by my being naturalized a Hun, before I submit to any such proceeding."

"'Tis a most august and solemn proceeding," replied Combalet de Carignan, "and many of the first nobility have submitted to it without blushing."

"His infirmity! his infirmity!" cried Jacques Mocqueur. "I pray your Lordship would not forget his infirmity! Not a noble in these or former times ever thought of submitting to the ceremony but yourself;—but after all, it is but a ceremony, which binds you to nothing."

"If that be the case," replied I, "I will go; but be so good as to remark, that I have nothing upon my person but the ten gold pieces which I have promised your worthy monarch; and I beg that you will give notice thereof to

the worthy corporation I am going to meet, lest the devil of cupidity should tempt them to play me foul."

"For that, we are your Lordship's sureties," said Combalet. "I should like to see the man who would wag a finger against you, while we stood by your side."

"Your Lordship does us injustice," said Jacques Mocqueur, in a less swaggering tone. "There is honour, even to a proverb, amongst the gentlemen you are going to meet; but if you are at all afraid, one of us will stay till your return, at the Hotel de Soissons, where our friend the archer informed us you really lodged."

"I am not the least afraid," replied I: "but I spoke, knowing that human nature is fallible; and that the idea of gold might raise up an evil spirit amongst some of your companions, which even you might find it difficult to lay. However, lead on, I will follow you."

"I question much whether the council has yet met," replied Combalet; "but we shall be some time in going, and therefore we may as well depart."

We accordingly proceeded into the street, where I went on first, followed, scarcely a step behind, by my two bravoes, in the manner of a gentleman going on some visit accompanied by

his lackeys. At every corner of each street, either Combalet or his companion whispered to me the turning I was to take; and thus we proceeded for near half an hour, till I became involved in lanes and buildings with which I was totally unacquainted, notwithstanding my manifold melancholy ramblings through Paris, when I was there alone and tormented with gloomy thoughts that drove me forth continually, for mere occupation. The houses seemed to grow taller and closer together, and in many of the lanes through which we passed, I could have touched each side of the street, by merely stretching out my hands. Darkness too reigned supreme, so that it was with difficulty that I saw my way forward; and certainly should often not have known that there was any turning near, had it not been for the whisper of my companions, "To the right," or "To the left!"

The way was long too and tortuous, winding in and out, with a thousand labyrinthine turnings, as if it had been built on purpose to conceal every kind of vice, and crime, and wretchedness, amongst its obscure involutions.

Every now and then from the houses as I passed, burst forth the sound of human voices; sometimes in low murmurs, sometimes in loud and boisterous merriment; and sometimes even

in screams and cries of enmity or pain, that made my blood run cold. Still, however, I pursued my purpose. I could but lose my life,—and life to me had not that value which it possesses with the happy and the prosperous. I would have sold it dear, nevertheless, and was well prepared to do so, for I was armed with dagger, sword, and pistol; so that, setting the object to be gained by murdering me, which could but be my clothes, with the risk and bloodshed of the attempt, I judged myself very secure, though I found clearly that I was plunging deeper and deeper every moment among those sinks of vice, iniquity, and horror, with which some part of every great city is sure to be contaminated.

Suddenly, as I was proceeding along one of these narrow streets, a hand was laid firmly, but not rudely, on my breast; and a voice asked, “Where go ye?” Jacques Mocqueur stepped forward instantly, and whispering a word to my interrogator, I was suffered to proceed. In a few minutes after, we arrived at a passage, where my bravoes informed me that it would be necessary to bandage my eyes, which was soon done; and being conducted forward, I perceived that we went into a house, the entrance of which was so narrow, that it was with difficulty

Combalet could turn sufficiently to lead me onward by the hand. I took care as we went to count the number of paces, and to mark well the turnings, so that, I believe, I could have retraced my steps had it been necessary.

After turning four times, we once more emerged into the open air, as if we crossed an inner court, and I could hear a buzz of many voices, seemingly from some window above. We now again entered a house; and, having turned twice, the braves halted, and I heard an old woman's voice cry in a ragged, broken tone, "They are waiting for you, you two lazy jessame flinchers. And what new devil have you brought with you?—A pretty piece of flesh, I declare! Why, he has a leg and an arm like the man of bronze."

While these observations were being made upon my person, my two worthy retainers were detaching the bandage from my eyes; and as soon as I could see, I found myself standing in a large vestibule at the foot of a staircase. An iron lamp hung from the ceiling, and by its light I beheld a hideous old woman, in that horrid state where mental imbecility seemed treading on the heels of every sort of vice. Her high aquiline nose, her large bleared, dull eyes, swimming between drunkenness and folly, her

wide mouth, the lips of which had long since fallen in over her toothless gums, all offered now a picture of the most degrading ugliness ; while, with a kind of gloating gaze, she examined me from head to foot, crying from time to time, " A pretty piece of flesh !— ay, a pretty piece of flesh !— nice devil's food !— will you give me a kiss, young Beelzebub ?" And throwing her arms suddenly round me, she gave me a hug that froze the very blood in my veins.

I threw her from me with disgust ; and, in her state of semi-drunkenness, she tottered back and fell upon the pavement, giving a great scream ; on which a man, who had been lying in a corner totally unseen by me, sprang up, and drawing his sword rushed upon me, crying, " Morbleu, Maraud ! How dare you strike mother Marinette ?"

It was a critical moment. To do any thing with the wild and lawless, it needs to show oneself as fierce and fearless as themselves. My sword was out in an instant ; and, knowing that sometimes a display of daring courage, with men like those amongst whom I was placed, will touch the only feelings that remain in their seared and blackened hearts, and do more with them than any other earthly quality, I cried out to my two retainers, who were hurrying to sepa-

rate us, "Let him alone ! let him alone ! —We are man to man. I only ask fair play."

"Fair play ! Give him fair play !" cried Combalet and his companion to half a dozen ruffians that came rushing down the stairs at the noise. "Give the Count fair play !"

"It's a quarrel about a lady !" cried Jacques Moequeur. "An affair of honour ! A duello ! Let no one interrupt them."

In the mean while my antagonist lunged at me with vain fury. He was not unskilful in the use of his weapon; but his was what may be called *bravo-fencing*, very well calculated for street brawls, where five or six persons are engaged together, but not fit to be opposed to a really good swordsman, calmly hand to hand. His traverses were loose, and he bore hard against my blade, so that at last, suddenly shifting my point, I deceived him with a half time, and not willing exactly to kill him, brought him down with a severe wound in his shoulder.

"Quarter for Goguenard ! Quarter for Goguenard !" cried the respectable spectators, several of whom had, during the combat, served me essentially by withholding Madame Marinette (the beldame whose caresses I had repulsed so unceremoniously) from exercising her talons upon my face. My sword was instantly

sheathed, and my antagonist being raised, looked at me with a grim grin, but without any apparent malice. "You've sliced my bacon," cried he; "but, *Ventre saint gris!* you are a tight hand, and I forgive you."

The wounded man was now carried off to have his wound *puttied*, as he expressed it; and I was then ushered up-stairs into a large room, wherein all the swash bucklers, that the noise of clashing swords had brought out like a swarm of wasps when their nest is disturbed, now hastened to take their seats round a large table that occupied the centre of the hall. In place of the pens, the inkhorns, and the paper, which grace the more dignified council boards of more modern nations, that of the worthy Huns was only covered, in imitation of their ancestors, with swords and pistols, daggers and knives, bottles, glasses, and flagons, symbolical of the spirit in which their laws were conceived, and the sharpness with which they were enforced.

At the head of the table, when we entered, were seated four or five of the sager members of the council, who had not suffered their attention to be called from their deliberations like the rest; and in a great arm-chair raised above the rest, was placed a small old man,

with sharp grey eyes, a keen pinched nose, and a look of the most infallible cunning I ever beheld in mortal countenance. He wore his hat buttoned with a large jewel, and was very splendidly attired in black velvet ; so that, from every circumstance of his appearance, I was inclined to believe I beheld in him that very powerful and politic monarch called the King of the Huns.

“ As Combalet de Carignan and Jacques Mocqueur were leading me forward in state to present me to the monarch, he rose, and, stroking his short grey beard from the root to the point between his finger and thumb, he demanded with an air of dignity, “ What noise was that I heard but now, and who dared to draw a sword within the precincts of our royal palace ? ”

This question was answered by Jacques Mocqueur with the following delectable sentence : — “ May it please your Majesty, the case was, that old Marinette did the sweet upon the Count here, who buffed her a swagger that earthed her marrow-bones ; whereupon mutton-faced Goguenard aired his pinking-iron upon the Count, and would have made his chanter gape, if the Count had not sliced his bacon, and brought him to kiss his mother.”

This explanation, however unintelligible to me at the time, seemed perfectly satisfactory to the great potentate to whom it was addressed ; who nodding to me with a gracious inclination, replied, "The Count most justly punished an aggression upon the person of an ambassador. Let our Secretary propose the oaths to the Count, our cup-bearer bring forward our solemn goblet, and let the worthy nobleman take the oaths, and be naturalized a true and faithful Hun."

A meagre gentleman in a black suit now advanced towards me, with a book in his hand, and proposed to me to swear that I would be thenceforward a true and faithful subject to the mighty monarch, François St. Maur, King of the Huns ; that I would act as a true and loyal Hun in all things, but especially in submitting myself to all the laws of the commonwealth, and the ordinances of the King in council ; as well as in keeping inviolably secret all the proceedings of the Huns, their places of resort, their private signs, signals, designs, plans, plots, and communications, with a great variety of other particulars, all couched in fine technical language, which took nearly a quarter of an hour in repeating.

Greater part of this oath I took the liberty of

rejecting, giving so far in to their mockery of ceremony, as to state my reasons to the monarch, with an affectation of respect that seemed to please him not a little: and, though one or two of the ruffians thought fit to grumble at any concessions being made to me, it was nevertheless arranged that the oath should be curtailed in my favour, to a solemn vow of secrecy, which I willingly took.

An immense wrought goblet of silver was now presented to me, which I should have imagined to be a chalice filched from some church, had it not been for various figures of Bacchanals and satyrs richly embossed on the stalk and base. I raised it to my lips, drinking to the monarch of the Huns, who received my salutation standing; but the very first mouthful showed me that it was filled with ardent spirits; and returning it to the cup-bearer, I begged that I might be accommodated with wine, for that there was quite enough in the cup to incapacitate me for fulfilling the important mission with which I was charged.

A loud shout at my flinching from the cup was the first reply; and one of the respectable cut-throats exclaimed from the other side of the table, "Give some milk and water to the chicken-hearted demoiselle."

I had already had enough of brawling for the night ; and as no farther object was to be gained by noticing the ruffian's insult at the time, I took the cup that was now presented to me filled with wine, and drank health to the King of the Huns, without seeming to hear what had been said.

The most delicate part of my mission still remained to be fulfilled, namely, to explain to the chief of all the thieves, swindlers, and bravocs in Paris, for such was the King of the Huns, the objects of the Count de Soissons, without putting his name and reputation in the power of every ruffian in the capital ; and as I looked round the room, which was now crowded with men of every attire and every carriage, I found a thousand additional reasons in each villainous countenance, for being as guarded and circumspect as possible.

How I should have acquitted myself, Heaven only knows ; but a great deal of trouble was taken off my hands by the King of the Huns himself ; who, after regarding me for a moment with his little grey eyes, that seemed to enter into one's very heart, and pry about in every secret corner thereof, opened the business himself, and left my farther conduct comparatively easy.

“Count de l'Orme,” said he in a loud voice,

while all the rest kept silence, "you have sought an interview with us, and you have gained it. Ordinary politicians would now use all their art to conceal what they know of your purpose, and to make you unfold to them more perhaps than you wished; but we, with the frankness that characterises a great nation, are willing to show you that we are already aware of much more than you imagine. You sent word to us that you came on a mission from a Prince. We will save you the trouble of naming him. He is Louis de Bourbon, Count de Soissons!"

A murmur of surprise at the penetration of the King ran through the assembly; but to me his means of information on this point were evident enough. The archer had communicated to the braves that, though I received them in the rue Prêtres St. Paul, I lodged myself at the Hotel de Soissons. They had informed their chief of the same, and by an easy chain of conclusions, he had fallen upon the right person as my principal.

How he came by the rest of his information I do not know; but he proceeded. "His Highness the Count de Soissons is universally loved, in the same proportion that the Minister, his enemy, is hated; and there is not one man

amongst my subjects who does not bear the greatest affection to the one, and the greatest abhorrence towards the other."

A loud shout of assent interrupted him for a moment; but when it had subsided, he went on. "The Count is, we are well informed, preparing on all hands for open war with the Cardinal; and we also know, that there is more than one agent working privately in this city for his service. We are not amongst those who will be most backward, or most inefficient in his cause; and we only wish to know, in the first instance, what he expects of us—Not that I mean to say," he added, "that we do not intend therein to have some eye to our own interests; yet, nevertheless, the Count will not find us hard or difficult to deal with, as our enemies would have men believe."

In answer to this speech, I went directly to the point, finding that all diplomatizing on the subject was spared me. I therefore told the King of the Huns that he was perfectly right in the view he had taken of the case; and that as the Count was now driven to extremity by the Cardinal, it was natural that he should take every means to strengthen his own cause. Of course, under these circumstances, I added, he would not think of neglecting so large and

respectable a body as the Huns, and had therefore sent me to pray them, in case of a rising in the city of Paris on his part, to support his friends with all their aid and influence, and to embarrass his enemies by all those means which no men knew so well how to employ as themselves. I farther added, that if, under the permission and sanction of their government, any of his Majesty's subjects would enrol themselves as men at arms, to serve the Count de Soissons under my command, the prospect of vast advantages was before them; but that, of course, I should require those men who, having some knowledge of military discipline and habits, would not need the long and tedious drilling of young recruits.

"Such have we amongst our subjects in plenty," replied the King of the Huns. "We are, as I need not inform you, essentially a military nation; and for our own credit, the troops we furnish to our well-beloved cousin, Monsieur le Comte, shall be of the best quality."

A murmuring conversation now took place through the assembly, each man expressing to his neighbour his opinion of what had just passed, in a low voice, that, left nothing audible but the various curses and imprecations with which they seasoned their discourse, and which sea-

soning certainly predominated over the matter. This left me, however, an opportunity of gaining some private speech of the King, with whom, in a very short time, I contrived to settle all preliminaries. I paid my ten Louis into the treasury, and promised twenty more, in case of his showing himself active and serviceable in the rising of the metropolis. He, on his part, engaged to select and send to a certain point on the frontiers, as many horsemen as he could rely upon, who were to take service with me, and to bind themselves by oath to obey my commands for one month. For the first month, all I could promise in regard to pay was twenty crowns per man; but this seemed quite satisfactory; and I believe the plunder to be expected, whichever party gained the day, was much more tempting in their eyes than the ostensible reward. The rendezvous was named at the little village of Marigny, beyond Mouzon, just over the frontier; and it was agreed that the King should send me, from time to time, a note of the numbers he dispatched; and that on my arrival at Marigny I should disburse to each man his pay in advance, on his taking the stipulated oath, and showing himself ready for action, armed with sword, pistol, dagger, morion, back and breast pieces, and musketoon.

The number which his most Hunlike Majesty thought he could promise was about three hundred men; and I very naturally supposed that I should have somewhat of a difficult command over men who had long submitted to no law but their own will.

I knew also, that so trifling an incident as my having refused to pledge the King in his goblet of strong waters might do much harm to my future authority; and therefore, after having risen to go, I ran my eye down the opposite side of the table, and said in a loud voice, "Some one, about an hour ago, called me 'a chicken-hearted demoiselle.' If he will stand out here in the free space, I will give him the most convincing proof that my heart is as stout as his own, and my hand not that of a girl."

A fellow with the form and countenance of an ox-slayer instantly started up, but his companions thrust him down again, several voices crying out, "No, no! down with him! the Count is no flincher; look at Goguenard, the best man amongst us, flogged like a sheep!"

"If any proof were wanting," said Jacques Moequeur, stepping forward, "to establish the noble Count's slashing qualities, I could give it. I am known to be a tough morsel for any man's grinders; and yet, once upon a day, the Count

did for two of us single-handed. He sent Captain Voncrack out of the window sack-of-wheat fashion, and left me with the flesh of my arm gaping like an empty flagon."

This matter being settled, I drank a parting cup with his Majesty, to the prosperity of the Huns, which was of course received with a loud shout; and, conducted by Combalet de Carignan and his companion, I left Chateau Escroc, with my whole frame fevered and burning, from the excitement I had undergone.

I have only farther to remark, that, according to the oath of secrecy which I had taken, I should not now have placed even this interview on paper, had not that respectable body with whom I passed the evening been discovered some years since, and totally routed out of all their dens. The fraternity of the Huns will doubtless ever exist in Paris; but, thanks to the exertions of our late energetic criminal lieutenant, they are now, like the Jews, a dispersed and wandering people, each depending on his own resources, and turning the public to his own particular profit.

## CHAPTER XI.

DURING the ten days which followed, I received every morning news of some new detachment having set out for Marigny ; and each dispatch from the King of the Huns gave me the most positive assurance of his co-operation in favour of the Prince, as soon as a signal should be given for the rising in Paris.

De Retz was enchanted with the progress I had made, and declared, with a sneer even at the enterprise in which he was himself engaged, that now we possessed the poor, the prisoners, and the cut-throats, our success in Paris was certain.

"Amongst my researches," said he one day, while we were speaking over these circumstances, "I have met with a man that puzzles me. He is certainly poor, even to beggary, at least so my scout, who discovered him, assures me ; and yet

he refused pecuniary assistance, though offered in the most delicate manner I could devise, and repulsed me so haughtily, that I could not introduce one word of treason or conspiracy into my discourse. As you, my dear Count, are about to venture yourself in mortal strife, you could not have a more serviceable follower than this man's appearance speaks him. He is a Hercules; and if his eye does not play the braggart in its owner's favour, he is just a man to kill lions and strangle serpents. You could not do better than visit him, telling him that you are my friend, and that I am most anxious to serve him, if he will point me out the means."

I was very willing to follow the suggestion of Monsieur de Retz, being at the very time engaged in searching for a certain number of personal attendants, whose honesty might in some degree neutralize the opposite qualities of those that waited me at Marigny. Having received the address then, I proceeded to a small street in the *cité*; and mounting three pair of stairs, knocked at a door that had been indicated to me. A deep voice bade me come in; and, entering a miserable apartment, I beheld the object of my search. The light was dim; but there was something in the grand athletic limbs and proud erect carriage, that made me start by

their sudden call upon old recollections. It was Garcias himself, whom I had left at Barcelona borne high upon the top of that fluctuating billow, popular favour, that now stood before me in apparent poverty in Paris.

He started forward and grasped my hand. "Monsieur de l'Orme!" cried he, "God of Heaven! then I am not quite abandoned."

His tale was not an extraordinary one. He had fallen as he had risen. The nobility of Catalonia, finding that the insurgents maintained themselves, and received aid from France, declared for the popular party, gradually took possession of all authority; and, to secure it, provided for the ruin of all those who had preceded them. Garcias was the most obnoxious, because he had been the most powerful while the lower classes had predominated. Causes of accusation are never wanting in revolutions, even against the best and noblest; and Garcias was obliged to fly, to save himself from those whose liberties he had defended and saved. Spain was now all shut against him. France was his only refuge; and, finding his way to Paris, he set himself down in that great luxurious city, with that most scorching curse in his own breast, a proud heart gnawed by poverty.

"But your wife, Garcias!" demanded I, after

listening to his history—"your wife! what has become of her?"

"She is an angel in Heaven!" replied he abruptly, at the same time turning away his head. "Monsieur de l'Orme," he added more firmly, "do not let us speak of her—it unmans me. You have seen a fair flower growing in the fields, have you not?—Well, you have plucked it, and putting it in your bonnet, have borne it in the mid-day sun and the evening chill; and when you have looked for the flower at nightfall, you have found but a withered, formless, beautiful thing, that perforce you have given back to the earth from which it sprang. Say no more!—say no more! Thus she passed away!"

Since we had parted, misfortunes had bent the proud spirit of the Spaniard, while my own had gained more energy and power; so that now, it was I who exercised over him the influence he had formerly possessed over me. The aid he had refused from Monsieur de Retz, from me he was willing to accept; and, explaining to him my situation, I easily prevailed upon him to join himself to my fortunes, and to aid me in disciplining and commanding the very doubtful corps I had levied.

Upon pretence of wishing him nearer to me, I would not leave him till I had installed him in

my lodgings in the Rue des Prêtres ; and there, I took care that he should be supplied with every thing that was externally necessary to his comfort, and that his mind should be continually employed.

I now added six trusty servants to my retinue, provided horses and arms for the whole party, and my business in Paris being nearly concluded, prepared to return to Sedan without loss of time ; when one morning a note was left at my little lodging, desiring my presence at the Palais Cardinal the next evening at four o'clock, and signed "*Richelieu*."

I instantly sent off my six servants to Meaux, keeping with me Combalet de Carignan, his companion Jacques Moqueur, Garcias, and Achilles, with the full intention of bidding adieu to Paris the next morning, and putting as many leagues as possible between myself and his Eminence of Richelieu, before the hour he had named. Time was when I should have waited his leisure with the palpitating heart of hope, and now I prepared to gallop away from him with somewhat more speed than dignity. The *tempora mutantur et nos mutamur* goes but a little way to tell the marvels that a month can do.

My plans, however, were disarranged by very unexpected circumstances.

*On returning to my apartments at the Hotel de Soissons, I sat down for a moment to write; when, after a gentle tap, the door opened, and in glided the pretty embroidery girl whom, on my first arrival at the house, I had seen holding the silks for the Countess's work. She advanced, and gave a note into my hands, and was then retiring.*

"From the Countess, my pretty maid?" demanded I.

"No, Sir," she replied. "Pray do not tell the Countess that I gave it to you;" and so saying, she glided out of the chamber faster than she came.

I opened the note immediately, seeing that there was some mystery in the business; and with a tumult of feelings varying at every word, like the light clouds driven across an autumn sky, now all sunshine, now all shadow, I read what follows:—

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE,

"I HAVE just learned from my father, that by some strange error you have not yet heard of my recovery, and that you have been passing the best of your days in regret for having, as you imagined, killed me, though we are both well aware that the wound I received was given

in your own defence. I have been misled, Monsieur le Comte, by those who should have taught me right; but I will no longer be commanded, even by my father, to do what is against my conscience; and therefore I write you this letter, to tell you that I am still in life. So conscious was I from the first that I had received my wound as a punishment from Heaven for that which I was engaged in, that, on recovering my senses at the chateau, I attributed my situation to the accidental discharge of my own gun. All I can add is, that I always loved you, and would have served you with all my heart, had not other people put passions and wishes into my head that I ought never to have entertained. From all that, my eyes are now cleared; and, as a proof of it, I give you the following information—that if you will this evening at eight o'clock, when it is beginning to grow dusk, go sufficiently attended to the first carrefour on the road to Vincennes, you will have the means of saving her you love best, from much fear and discomfort. Even should you be too late, be under no dread that she will meet with any serious evil. On that score depend upon

JEAN BAPTISTE ARNAULT."

"P. S. The carriage in which they convey her is red, with a black boot on each side."

I sprang up from the table, like Ixion unbound from his wheel. The load was off my bosom—I no longer felt the curse of Cain upon me—my heart beat with a lightness such as we know in boyhood; and the gay blood running along my veins seemed to have lost the curdling poison that had so long mingled with it. It was then I first fully knew how heavily, how dreadfully the burden of crime had sat upon me, even when my immediate thoughts were turned to other things. I felt that it had made me old before my time—daring, reckless, hopeless. But now I seemed to have regained the youngness, the freshness of my spirit; and Hope once more lighted her torch, and ran on before, to illumine my path through the years to come.

In the first tumult of my feelings, reflection upon all the collateral circumstances was out of the question; but upon consideration, I saw painfully how strange my absence must have appeared to my family, from Jean Baptiste having concealed that I was the person who wounded him. Doubtless, I thought he had told his father, who had thereupon instantly taken Helen from the chateau; and thus my mother had been led to connect my absence with her removal.

Several parts of Jean Baptiste's letter surprised me much. Of course, however, I put my own interpretation upon them, and then bent my thoughts upon the danger which, as he informed me, menaced my dear Helen. What its nature could be I could not divine; but without wasting time in endeavouring to discover that on which I had no means of reasoning, I proceeded as fast as possible to the lodgings where I had left Garcias; and, sending Achilles for Combalet and his companion, prepared to set out to the place which the letter had indicated. It was by this time wearing towards evening; but we had still a full hour between us and the time appointed. My impatience, however, would not brook the delay; and therefore, as soon as I had collected all my attendants, I set off at full speed, and arrived at the first carrefour on the road to Vincennes, about half-past seven o'clock.

It was still quite light, and a great many of the evening strollers of the city and its environs were passing to and fro, so that the sight of a gentleman in mourning, with four somewhat conspicuous attendants, planted in the middle of a cross road, did not escape without remark. One by one, however, the observers passed away, each leaving a longer and a longer interval be-

tween himself and his successor, while daylight also gradually diminished, and it became dark enough to conceal us from any but very watchful eyes. In the mean while, my imagination went throughout all the various evolutions that an impatient spirit can impose upon it; at one time fancying that I had mistaken the spot; at another, supposing that I had been purposely deceived; and at another, believing that the carriage which contained Helen had taken a different road.

At length, however, the creaking of wheels seemed to announce its approach, and, drawing back as far as we could from observation, we waited till it came up. At about twenty paces in advance came two horsemen, one of whom, as soon as he arrived at the carrefour, dismounted, and gave his horse to his companion, while he went back, and opening the door of the carriage, got in. I could not see his face; but he was a short man, not taller than my little servant Achilles, which was the more remarkable, from the difficulty he had in reaching the high step of the carriage. In a moment after, I heard Helen's voice exclaim, "I have been deceived! I will go no farther! Let me descend, or I will call for assistance!"

She was not obliged to call, however. As-

sistance was nearer than she thought. "Seize the horses, Combalet," cried I; and rushing forward, I tore open the door of the carriage, exclaiming, "It is I, Helen! it is Louis!—Who has dared to deceive you?"

She sprang out at once into my arms, while the man who had entered the carriage just before made his escape at the other side. Swords by this time were drawn and flashing about our heads; for some men who had accompanied the vehicle made a momentary show of resistance; but they were soon in full flight, and we remained masters of the field without any bloodshed.

Whom I had delivered her from—what I had done, I knew no more than the child unborn; but she clung to me with that dear confiding clasp, in which woman's very helplessness is strong, and repeated over and over her thanks, with those words, with that tone, which assured me that every feeling of her heart was still mine. "Tell me, tell me, dear Louis!" said she at length, "by what happy chance you came here to deliver me!"

"It was by a note from Jean Baptiste," replied I. "But, dearest Helen, explain to me all this; for I am still in the dark. I know not whom I have delivered you from—I know not what danger assailed you."

Helen now, between the confusion of the moment, and the supposition that I knew a thousand circumstances of which I had not the slightest idea, began a long detail which was totally unintelligible to me. She spoke of having been at the Hotel de Chatillon, waiting the return of her father from Peronne, and went on to say that a forged letter had been sent her, signed with his name, importing that a carriage and attendants would come for her at a certain hour to bring her to where he was ; and so perfectly imitated was the signature, she said, that not only herself but the Countess de Chatillon had also been deceived. She was in the act of adding a great many particulars, which completely set my comprehension at defiance, when a party of horsemen, galloping like madmen, arriving on the spot, interrupted her farther narration.

"Here they are ! here they are !" cried the foremost horseman, seeing through the semi-darkness the lumbering machine which had brought Helen thither, blocking up the road. "Here is the carriage ! cut down the villains !"

"Hold, hold !" exclaimed I, drawing my sword, and advancing before Helen, while my sturdy retainers prepared for instant warfare. "Hold, fair Sir, a moment. Words before

blows, if you please. Who are you? and what do you seek?"

"*Morbleu!* Cut them down!" cried the young man, aiming a blow at my head, which I parried and returned, with such interest, that, I believe, he would not have struck many more had not a less hasty personage ridden up, crying, "Hold, hold! Charles, I command you hold. — Sir Stranger, hear me! You asked our name and what we seek," he added, seeing me pause. "My name is the *Maréchal de Châtillon!* and now, Sir, tell me yours; and how you dare, by false pretences, to carry off a young lady from my house, placed under my care by her father?"

"My name, Sir," replied I, "is Louis Count de l'Orme; and in reply to your second question, far from having carried off this young lady from your house, I have just had the pleasure of rescuing her from the hands of those who did — which you would have heard before, if this hasty person had been willing to listen, rather than bully."

"He is, Sir, as you have said, far over hasty," replied the *Maréchal*; "but begging your forgiveness for his mistake, I have only farther to thank you, on the part of the lady, for the ser-

vice you have rendered her, and to request that you would give her into my hands, as the only person qualified to protect her for the moment."

"I must first be satisfied that you are really the Maréchal de Chatillon, and that the lady goes with you willingly," replied I, "for there have been so many mistakes to-night apparently, that I do not otherwise yield her till I have seen her in safety myself."

"Yes, yes, Louis," replied Helen,—"I thought, with a sigh—"It is Monsieur de Chatillon, and I must go with him—after once more giving you a thousand thanks for my deliverance."

"Since such is the case, Monsieur de Chatillon," I rejoined, "I of course resign a charge, which otherwise I should not easily have abandoned: but I must claim the privilege, as one of this lady's earliest friends, of visiting her to-morrow morning, to hear those particulars which I have not been able to hear to-night."

"I cannot object to such an arrangement," replied the Maréchal alighting, while his more impetuous companion made his horse's feet clatter with a touch of the spur. "I cannot object to such a meeting—always understood, that the Countess of Chatillon be present.—The carriage

in which the rogues carried you off, my fair Helen," added he, taking her hand from mine, with much gentlemanlike frankness, "shall serve to carry you back again; and I will be your companion."

Helen now took leave of me, with more tenderness than at least the younger horseman liked; for he turned his beast's head and rode a little away. The Maréchal then handed her into the carriage, and, turning to me, he said in a low voice, "Your visit, Monsieur le Comte de l'Orme, if it must be, had better be early, for this young lady is about to undertake a long journey by desire of her father; but, if you would follow my advice, you would, instead of visiting her at all, turn your horse's head from Paris as speedily as possible; for, believe me, neither your journeys to Sedan, nor your proceedings in this capital, have been so secret as to escape suspicion." He paused for a moment, after having spoken, as if he waited an answer, or watched the effect of what he had said. It came upon me, I will own, as if some one had struck me; but I had presence of mind enough to reply—"My proceedings in this city, Seigneur, have certainly been sufficiently open; and, consequently, should pass without suspicion, if the actions of any one be suffered to do

so. My journey to Sedan was open enough also; but my return from that place was as much so; and therefore, I suppose, I have nothing to fear on that score."

"My warning, Sir, was given as a friend," replied the Maréchal de Chatillon; "and I would rather meet you a few days hence in the battle field, as a fair enemy, than hear that you had been consigned to the dungeons of the Bastille, or executed in the Place de Grève.—Adieu, Monsieur de l'Orme; make the best of my warning, for it is one not to be neglected." Thus speaking, he entered the carriage; and one of his followers, who had dismounted, shut the door and took the place of the driver, who had fled at the sight of drawn swords. Then turning the horses towards Paris, he drove on followed by the train of the Maréchal de Chatillon.

In the mean time, the warning I had received sunk deep into my mind; and though I resolved to risk every thing rather than quit Paris without coming to a full explanation with Helen, and satisfying myself concerning a thousand doubts that hung upon me, I despatched Garcias with Jacques Mocqueur to Meaux that very night, with the necessary letters of exchange to pay the troop that waited me at Marigny, and an order for them to obey

him as myself, in case of my arrest or death; begging him at the same time, in either event, to lead them to Sedan, and head them in the cause of the Count de Soissons. Combalet and Achilles I took with me to the Hotel de Soissons, but kept them there only for a moment, while I gathered together all my papers and effects. After which I gave the whole package into the hands of Achilles, and sending both out of the town with their own two horses, and a led one for me, I bade them wait for me at the village of Bondy till dusk the next night. If I came not then, they had orders to join Garcias at Meaux, and tell him that I was arrested.

All these precautions taken, I went to bed and slept.

## CHAPTER XII.

It was barely light the next morning, when I was startled by hearing some one in my sleeping chamber, and to my still greater surprise perceived a woman.

The haughtiness and reserve with which the Countess de Soissons had thought fit to treat me had restrained all communication between us during my residence in her dwelling, to the mere observance of a few ceremonious forms, and therefore it seemed strange that she should either visit me herself at such an hour, or even send any of her attendants. The person who, not seeing I was awake, approached quickly towards me, was no other, however, than the pretty little embroidery girl who had brought me the billet from Jean Baptiste the day before.

“Monsieur de l'Orme ! Monsicur de l'Orme !” cried she in a low but anxious voice, “for

God's sake, rise ! The Exempts are here to take you to the Bastille. I will run round and open that door. Come through it as quick as you can, and you can escape yet. My brother and Jean Baptiste will keep them as long as possible."

The door to which she pointed was one that communicated with a different part of the house, and had been locked externally ever since I had tenanted those apartments. She now ran round to open it, taking care, as I heard, to fasten all the doors of my suite of rooms as she went, so that I remained locked in on all sides. I lost no time, however, in my toilet, and was just dressed when she opened the door on the other side, while, at the same time, I could distinguish the noise of persons wrenching open the door of the farther ante-room. Three more locks still stood between me and my pursuers ; but without pausing on that account, I followed my pretty guide through several chambers and passages, till, descending a staircase, we entered the garden, and gliding behind a tall yew hedge which masked the garden wall, we made our way straight to the tower of Catherine de Medicis.

"They will search here certainly," said I, pausing, when I saw she intended to lead me

into the tower. "As soon as they find I have quitted my apartments, they will naturally examine this place of retreat."

"Hush!" cried she, "you do not know all its contrivances, Monseigneur." Opening the door, she permitted me to enter, and following, locked it on the inside. We now climbed the spiral staircase, up to the very highest part of the tower, and emerged on the stone platform at the top. Exactly opposite to the mouth of the staircase which we had ascended, she pointed out to me one of the large flag-stones with which the observatory was paved, saying, "You are a strong man—you can lift that."

I knelt down, and getting my fingers underneath the edge, easily raised it up, when I beheld another staircase precisely similar to that which we had ascended, and which, passing round and round the tower, exactly followed all the spires of the other, thus forming a double staircase through the whole building. My pretty companion now tried whether she could herself move the stone; and finding that she could do so with ease, as it was scarcely thicker than a slate, she followed me down, and drew it in the manner of a trap-door over us. The whole reminded me so much of my flight with the unhappy Viceroy of Catalonia,

that I hurried my steps as much as possible, with the remembrance vivid before my mind's eye, of the dreadful scene with which that flight was terminated.

"We are safe now, Monseigneur," said my fair guide, with a *naïveté* which some men might have mistaken for coquetry: "by your leave, we will not go so fast, for I lose my breath."

"If we are safe then, my pretty preserver," replied I, taking a jewel from my finger, which I had bought a few days before for a different purpose, "I have time to thank you for your activity in saving me, and to beg your acceptance of this ring as a remembrance."

"I will not take it myself, my Lord," replied she; "but, with your leave, I will give it to Jean Baptiste, who has a great regard for you, and who sent me to show you the way, as I know all the secret places of the hotel, and neither my brother nor he are acquainted with them."

"And I suppose that Jean Baptiste, then, is to be looked on in the light of your lover, fair lady?" demanded I.

"He is a friend of my brother, the Countess's page," replied the girl; and then added, after a moment, "and perhaps a lover too. I do not

see why I should deny it. He slept here last night with my brother, to be out of the way of some evil that was going on, and they two lying in the gate-house, first discovered that they were Exempts who knocked at the gate so early, and what they wanted."

"Will you bear a message to Jean Baptiste?" said I. "Tell him that I am not ungrateful for his kindness; and bid him tell his sister, that nothing but that which has this day happened would have prevented me from seeing her as I promised."

"His sister!" said the girl. "I did not know that he had a sister — but, hark! they are searching the tower."

As she spoke, I could plainly hear the sound of steps treading the other staircase, and passing directly over our heads; and curious was the sensation, to feel myself within arm's-length of my pursuers, without the possibility of their overtaking me.

"They have broken open the door," said my companion in a low tone. "We had better make haste; for when they do not find you in the tower, they may set guards in the streets round about."

We were by this time near the bottom of the stairs, and the light which had hitherto shone

in through various small apertures in the masonry of the tower, now left us, as we descended apparently below the level of the ground. My pretty little guide, however, seemed to hold herself quite safe with me, though the situation was one which might have been hazardous with many men, and led me on without seeming to give a thought to any thing but securing my safety, till we had passed through a long passage, at the end of which she pushed open a door, and at once ushered me into a small chamber, wherein an old woman was in bed. Startled out of a sound sleep, the good dame sat up, demanding who was there.

“ ’Tis I, aunt! ’tis I!” replied the girl; “ where is my uncle’s cloak? Oh, here; wrap yourself in that, Monseigneur, and take this old hat, and no one will know you.—I will tell you all about it, aunt,” she added, in answer to a complete hurricane of questions, which the old woman poured forth upon her; “ I will tell you about it when the Count is safe in the street.”

“ Is it the Count? Lord bless us!” cried the old woman, wiping her eyes, and mistaking me for the Count de Soissons: “ dear me! I thought Monseigneur was safe at Sedan.”

My fair guide now beckoning me forward, I left the old lady to enjoy her own wonderment;

and leaving a piece of gold for the hat and cloak, thrust the one over my brows, and cast the other round my shoulders, and proceeded to a second chamber, where was an old man at work, who looked up, but asked no questions, though probably he saw his own cloak and hat on the person of a stranger.

Opposite to me stood an open door, evidently leading into a small street; and taking leave of my conductress merely by a mute sign, I passed out, and to my surprise found myself in the Rue du Four.

I had kept my own hat still under the mantle, which was, in truth, somewhat too small to cover me entirely; the point of my sword, my boots, and almost my knees appearing from underneath, and betraying a very different station in life from that which the cloak itself bespoke. However, as thousands of intrigues of every kind are each day adjourned by the first rays of the sun that shine upon Paris, and as the parties to them must often be obliged to conceal themselves in many a motley disguise, I calculated that mine would not attract much attention dangerous to myself, if I could but escape from the immediate vicinity of the Hotel de Soissons. I therefore walked straight down the Rue du Four, and passing before the new

church of St. Eustache, I gained the Rue Montmartre, and thence crossing the Boulevards, was soon in the country. Pausing under an old elm, the emblematic tree of my family, I cast off the cloak and hat I had assumed, judging that I was now beyond the likelihood of pursuit, and walked as fast as possible towards Bondy. I arrived there in about a couple of hours, and found Achilles sauntering tranquilly before the door, while Combalet swaggered within to the new-risen host, hostess, and servants of the little inn, neither of my attendants expecting me for many an hour to come.

My order to horse was soon obeyed, and before mid-day I was safe at Meaux, where I gave but a temporary rest to my horses; and being joined by Garcias and the rest of my suite, I set out again with all speed towards Mouzon.

The necessity of borrowing another person's name was in those days so frequent with every one, that on my announcing myself to my servants as the young Baron de Chatillon, the nephew of the Maréchal of that name, I caused no astonishment, and they habituated themselves to the new epithet with great facility.

Riding on before with Garcias, I now explained to him all that had occurred, which I

had not had time to do before. My first piece of news, that Jean Baptiste Arnault was in existence, surprised him as much as it had done myself.

“I would have vowed,” said he, “that what I saw before me, when I joined you on that morning in the Park, was nothing but a heap of earth, which would never move, nor breathe, nor think again. It is very extraordinary! and now I think of it, Monsieur de l’Orme, I am afraid that I did you some unnecessary harm in the opinion of the Chevalier de Montenero. Do you remember that day, when we saved him from the fury of Gil Moreno? Well, as I was hurrying him away to his horse, I told him that his life itself depended on his speed; to which he answered, ‘I would give life itself to be assured whether Louis de Bigorre did slay him or not;’ alluding to something he had been speaking of with you. I thought as you did, that this Jean Baptiste was really dead; and therefore I replied at once, ‘Slay him! to be sure he did—and did right too.’”

“Good God! Garcias!” cried I. “He was speaking of another event—of the priest at Saragossa, whose death I had no more hand in than you had!”

I know not how it is, but often in life, one ac-

cidental mistake or misunderstanding appears to bring on another to all eternity. There seems occasionally to be something confounding and entangling in the very essence of the circumstances in which we are placed, which communicates itself to every thing connected with them; and, with one help or another, they go on through a long chain of errors from the beginning to the end.

My vexation was evident enough to mortify Garcias deeply, without my saying any more; and therefore, when he had told me that the Chevalier, on receiving the news he gave him, had instantly sprung into the saddle and ridden away in silence, I dropt a subject on which I felt that I could not speak without irritation, and turned to the coming events.

We continued our journey as rapidly as possible, and my *nom de guerre*, I found, served me well at all the various places of our halt, as I heard continually that troops were marching in all directions towards the frontier, evidently menacing Sedan, together with every particular that could be communicated to me respecting their line of march, their numbers, and condition; for all of which information, I was indebted to my assumed name of Chatillon, the Maréchal de Chatillon himself being appointed commander-in-

chief of the King's army, or rather, I might say, the Minister's, for the Monarch was calmly waiting the event of the approaching contest at Peronne, without showing that interest in favour of the Cardinal which he had hitherto evinced on all occasions.

We passed safe and uninterrupted across the whole country from Paris till we came within a few leagues of the banks of the Meuse, where the presence of the enemy's army rendered our movements more hazardous, and consequently more circumspect. From time to time we met several parties of stragglers hastening after the camp, with some of whom I spoke for a moment or two; and finding that no suspicions were entertained, and discipline somewhat relaxed, I ventured more boldly to the Meuse, and presented myself for passage at the wooden-bridge above Mouzon, after ascertaining that it was but slightly guarded. Notice had been given to all my followers, in case of the slightest opposition to our passage, to draw their swords and force their way across; and accordingly on the cravatte on duty demanding a passport, I said I would show it him, and drawing my sword bade him give way.

He did his duty by instantly firing his carbine at me, which had nearly brought my adventures to a termination; for the ball passed through my

hat; but spurring on our horses, we bore him back upon half-a-dozen others, who came running forward to his aid, drove them over the bridge at the sword's point, and, galloping on, gained the wood on the other side of the river.

After this rencontre we made all speed through the least frequented paths towards Marigny, and when we found ourselves within half a league of the village, I sent forward Jacques Mocqueur and Achilles to ascertain what had become of my recruits, whom I found I had posted somewhat too near the enemy's position.

In about an hour they returned, bringing with them a single trooper, who was without a casque of any kind, and wore a peasant's coat over his more warlike habiliments. In addition to all this, he had apparently taken as much care of his inward man as of his outward, for he was considerably more than half drunk.

"Happy for this sweet youth," said Achilles, who, as may have been observed, was fond of displaying his antique learning—"happy for this sweet youth, that we are not amongst the Epizephrii, or he would certainly have been hanged for drinking more wine than the physicians recommended. But we have drawn from him, Monseigneur, that his companions, judging themselves somewhat too near the enemy, have be-

taken themselves to the nearest branch of the forest of Ardennes, hard by the village of Saule, where they are even now celebrating their elaphobolia, or venison feasts, having left this Bacchus-worshipper to tell us the way.

Though our horses were weary, we could of course grant them no rest till they had carried us over the six leagues that still lay between us and Saule, which, after many mis-directions, we at last found—a little village cradled in the giant arms of the Ardennes.

My heart somewhat misgave me, lest my respectable recruits should have exercised any of their old plundering propensities upon the peasantry; and the appearance and demeanour of the comrade they had left behind, to acquaint us with their change of position, did not speak much in favour of their regularity and discipline: but I did them injustice; and on my arrival, though I found that they had laid many of the antlered people of the forest low, and eke added many a magnificent forest hog to their stores of provision, they had not at all molested the populace of the country, who remembering the ravages of Mansfelt's free companions, looked upon my followers as very sober and peaceable soldiers indeed.

When I arrived, they were in a large piece of open forest ground, between the village and the

actual wood. A great many old oaks had been cut down there the year before, and their roots had sent out a multitude of young shoots, amongst which the daring, hardy men I had engaged had gathered themselves together in picturesque groups, roasting the venison for their evening meal, or claphobolia, as Achilles termed it. In the meanwhile the declining sun shone through the long glades of the forest, sometimes catching bright upon their corslets and morions, sometimes casting upon them a deep shadow from any of the ancient trees that remained still standing; but altogether, giving one of the finest and most extraordinary pieces of light and shade that ever I beheld. The noise of our horses' feet made them instantly start up from their various employments; and recognising me for their commander, they hailed my arrival with a loud shout.

They were all, as I soon found, old soldiers; and, well aware of the infinite use of discipline even to themselves, they had employed the time of my absence in choosing petty officers from amongst their own body, and in renewing their old military habits and manœuvres. The system which they had employed was not perhaps entirely that which my late military readings had taught me theoretically; but as I saw it would

cause me infinitely less trouble to adopt their plan, than it would give them to acquire mine, as well as be less liable to mistakes, I applied myself to reviewing and manœuvring them the whole of the next day, while I sent Achilles and one of my servants to Sedan, charged with my bills of exchange for paying my levies, and with a letter to the Count de Soissons, informing him of my success.

I felt well assured that all the news I conveyed to him would give the Count no small pleasure, not only having fulfilled all his wishes in Paris, but brought him a reinforcement of nearly three hundred mounted troopers, all veterans in affairs of war from their ancient profession, and acuminated in every point of stratagem from their more recent pursuits.

In the evening Achilles returned, bringing me the money I required; and a letter from the Prince, together with a reinforcement of twelve troopers, whom the Count judged might prove serviceable to me in disciplining my little force. The letter was as gratifying as ever flowed from the pen of man; and the money, which I instantly distributed amongst my followers, conjoined with the presence of the men-at-arms the Count had sent me, contributed to establish my authority with my recruits as firmly as I could wish;

though I believe that, before this came, they were beginning to grumble at the somewhat childish reiteration with which I took pleasure in making my new troop go through its evolutions. At the time, I found plentiful excuses in my own mind for so doing; but I believe now that my feelings were somewhat like those of a boy with a new plaything.

The next morning, according to the commands of the Count, I recrossed the Meuse by a bridge of boats which the Duke de Bouillon had newly caused to be constructed, and then marched my men upon a little hamlet behind the village of Torcy; after which I left them under the command of Garcias, as my adjutant; and accompanied by my servants turned my bridle towards Sedan, to communicate with the Prince, and receive his farther commands.

I arrived at Sedan about five of the clock. All within the town was the bustle and confusion of military preparation. Trumpets were sounding, arms were clanging in every direction: the breast-plate, the morion, and the spur, had taken place, in the streets, of the citizen's sober gown, and the man of law's stiff cap; and many an accoutred war-horse did I encounter in my way to the citadel, more than Sedan had ever known before. The servants that accom-

panied me, including Achilles, Combalet, and his companion, were nine in number; and I had taken good care before I left Paris, that they should be sufficiently armed, to take an active part in the warlike doings then in preparation. My train therefore, as I rode through the streets, excited some attention; and amongst a knot of gentlemen that turned to look, near the citadel, I perceived, to my surprise, the Marquis de St. Brie! It may well be supposed that the sight was not particularly gratifying; and I was passing on, without taking any notice, hoping that he would not recollect me, from the great change which the few months that had passed had wrought in my appearance. My beard, which, when I had last seen him, had been too short to be allowed to grow, was now longer, and cut into the fashionable point of that day; my mustachios were long and black; my form was broader, and more manly; and my skin, which then was pale with recent illness, was now bronzed almost to the colour of mahogany.

But he was not one of those men who easily forget; and, after looking at me for a moment, during which the change somewhat confused him, he became certain of my person; and

spurring forward with a smiling countenance, in which delight to meet with an old friend was most happily and dexterously expressed, "My dear Count Louis!" cried he, "I am delighted to see you. This is one of those unexpected pleasures with which that fair jilt, Fortune, sometimes treats us, to make us bear more patiently her less agreeable caprices."

I meditated knocking his brains out, but I forbore, on reflecting that the consequences of any violent proceeding on my part might be highly detrimental to the interest of the Prince. A moment's farther consideration made me pursue the very opposite course to that which I had first proposed; and smothering my feelings towards Monsieur de St. Brie, as far as I could, I replied, that the meeting was certainly most unexpected; but that, as I found him there, of course I supposed I was to look upon him as a friend and partizan of Monsieur le Comte's.

"Of course!" replied he. "I am his Highness's humble friend and devoted follower; though I have yet hardly the honour of his personal acquaintance; being far better known to the noble Duke of Bouillon. However, here I am, to fight side by side with you, my

dear Count, as I once proposed ; and we will see which will contrive to get his throat cut soonest in the Prince's service."

"It will certainly not be I," replied I gravely ; "for wherever the battle takes place, however I may exert myself therein, I shall come out of it as unscathed as I went in."

"Indeed ! how so ?" demanded the Marquis. "Do you wear a charmed coat of mail, or have you been dipped in Styx ?"

"Neither," replied I : "but it is my fate ! In the calculation of my activity, it has been found, that whoever seeks to take my life, their own shall be lost in the attempt. Two persons have made the essay, — and two have already fallen. We shall see who will be the third."

What I said was simply intended to touch the Marquis upon a spot where I knew he must be sensible ; but the excessive paleness that came over his countenance was far more than I expected to behold : it was more than I could suppose the mere fear of having been discovered would excite in a man of such principles. Could he be superstitious ? I asked myself.—He—a free-thinker, a sceptic, both by an erroneous application of his reason, and by the natural propensity of a sensualist to reject every

thing but what is material—could he be superstitious?

But so in fact it was, as I soon found more clearly by the multitude of questions which he asked me concerning the person who had calculated my nativity, and given the prediction I had mentioned; citing, as he did so, the names of all the astrologers in Europe, from Nostradamus up to Vanoni himself. After a moment, however, he seemed to be conscious that he was exposing himself; and looking up with a forced laugh, “Dreams! dreams!” said he, “my dear Count. How can the stars affect us upon the earth? If I were to choose a way of fooling myself with prophecies, a thousand times rather would I follow the art of the ancient Tuscans, and draw my divination from the lightning, which at all events comes near our mortal habitation.”

“I know you are a sceptic in all such matters,” replied I: and riding on, I left the Marquis to muse over the prediction as he thought fit, reserving to myself the right of calling him to a personal account for his former conduct towards me, when I should find a fitting opportunity. His character was then a new one to me, and I could hardly persuade myself that

he did really believe in the dreams which even my reason, all hag-ridden as it was by imagination, cast from it the moment it had power to follow its direct course. But I have had occasion to remark since, that those who reject the truth of religion are generally as prone as devotees to the dreams of superstition.

I was immediately admitted into the citadel, and as I was dismounting in the court, encountered Varicarville. "Welcome, welcome back ! Monsieur de l'Orme," said he. "We need all friends now to carry through our enterprise ; and Monsieur le Comte tells me, that you not only bring us good news from Paris, but a considerable reinforcement. You come from Torcy. What is the news there ? Did you see the enemy ? When are we likely to prove our strength together ?"

"I come to seek news myself," replied I. "No enemies have I seen, but half a dozen soldiers, that we drove over the wooden bridge near Mouzon. When does rumour say we shall have a battle ?"

"The day after to-morrow at farthest," replied Varicarville, "if Lamboy with his Germans arrives in time. But hie to the Prince, De l'Orme. He expects you, and is now waiting you in the saloon, hoping some news from Torcy."

I proceeded to the Count's apartments accordingly, and finding no one to announce me by the way, I entered the saloon at once. The Count de Soissons was leaning in a large arm chair, with his head bent forward, and one hand over his eyes, while Vanbroc, his Flemish lute-player, was playing to him the prelude of a song. My entrance did not make the Prince look up, and Vanbroc proceeded. After a few very sweet passages preliminary to his voice, he sung, as nearly as I can remember, the following, to a beautiful minor air.

## SONG.

## I.

Give me repose and peace ! Let others prove  
 The losing game of strife ;  
 Or climb the hill, or plough the wave ;  
 To find out fortune or a grave,  
 Stake happiness and life.  
 Oh, give me rest and peace,  
 And quietude and love !

## II.

Give me repose and peace ! The power, the sway,  
 The sceptre, crown, and throne,  
 Are thorny treasures, paying ill  
 The sacrifice of joy and will—  
 All man can call his own.  
 Oh, give me rest and peace,  
 To bless my humble day !

## III.

Give me repose and peace! I covet not  
The laurel or the wreath.  
Wars to the brave, strifes to the strong,  
Ambitions to the proud belong—  
All hand in hand with death.  
But be repose, and peace,  
And life, and joy, my lot !

The musician ceased, but still the Prince kept his hand before his eyes, and I could see the tears roll slowly from underneath it, and chase one another down his cheek, so great had been the power of the music upon him.

“No more, Vanbroc — no more!” said he, at length raising his eyes. “Ha! De l’Orme. You should not have seen me thus: but I was ever more easily vanquished by music than by the sword. But now to business: leave us, Vanbroc.”

The lute-player withdrew, and the Prince, instantly recovered from the momentary weakness into which he had been betrayed, proceeded to question me respecting the minor details of my negotiation in Paris. With all that I had done he expressed himself infinitely contented, and showed the confidence which my conduct had inspired him with, by making me acquainted with every particular that had taken

place at Sedan during my absence, together with all his future plans, as far as they were formed.

"To-morrow evening," said he, "or the next morning at farthest, Lamboy, the Imperial general, will join us with five thousand veteran Germans. As soon as he is prepared to pass the river, I also shall cross by the bridge, and forming our junction on the other side, we will together offer battle to the *Maréchal de Chatillon*, who has been for some days at Remilly."

"I believe your Highness is misinformed," replied I; "for hardly yet five days ago I saw *Monsieur de Chatillon* in Paris:" and I proceeded to inform the Count of the circumstances which made me so positive of the fact.

"He was there last night, however," replied the Count; "for one of our scouts watched him pass the Meuse and advance some way to reconnoitre Lamboy: his person was known, and there could be no doubt. At all events, we shall fairly offer our enemy battle on the day after to-morrow. Lamboy commands the infantry, Bouillon the cavalry, and myself the reserve.—But what makes you look so grave on my saying that Bouillon commands the cavalry?"

"My reason was frankly this, Monseig-

neur," replied I. "Monsieur de Bouillon has never shown any great regard for me; and I have farther this day met a person on whose conduct towards me I have already expressed myself to your Highness without restraint—I mean the Marquis de St. Brie." The Count started. "He boasts himself the friend of Monsieur de Bouillon," continued I, "and you may easily imagine what sort of harmony there can exist between him and me. The little troop I have levied, consisting entirely of cavalry, it will not of course be very pleasant to me to fight side by side with a man who has twice attempted my life; but however—"

"Stay, De l'Orme!" said the Count. "No likelihood exists of that taking place which you anticipate. Your troop has been destined by Bouillon and myself for a manœuvre, which we are sure you will execute well, and on which the fate of the battle may probably depend. If we can gain the ground that we wish, the cavalry, under the command of Bouillon, will remain in the hollow way till such time as the enemy lose somewhat of their compact order; as soon as ever this is ascertained, by a signal from the hill behind, where you may have remarked an ancient pillar—the signal, re-

member, is the raising of a red flag on the pillar — Bouillon advances and charges the cavalry of the enemy, but some co-operating movement may be necessary to second the efforts of the Duke, and, consequently, we have determined to post a body of cavalry behind a little wood, to the left of our position. You must have seen it. But you shall be furnished with a plan of the country, like this on the table. Here, you see, is the great wood of the Marfée. Here the little wood to the left, joined to the Marfée by this low copse, which I shall take care to garnish for you with a body of musketeers. Here the high summit, on which, if we have time to reach it, we shall take up our position; and here the hollow way for Bouillon's cavalry. Your body of troopers must be stationed just behind the wood, from whence you have a full view of the pillar. The moment you see the red flag, draw out and charge the right of the enemy. You have before you a gentle slope, which is, in truth, the only part of the ground fit for cavalry; and your being there will have two great advantages;—that of seconding Bouillon; and, in case of the enemy attempting to turn our left flank, that of making his manœuvre fall upon himself. It was for this reason that I ordered

*your troop on to the hamlet behind Torey, from whence, on the morning of the battle, you can easily take up your position as we have arranged. Do you fully understand ?*

*"Perfectly," replied I; "and the arrangement is of course most gratifying to me. Not that any circumstances should have induced me to pursue a private quarrel to the detriment of your Highness's service. I have already met the Marquis de St. Brie and spoken to him, without noticing his attempt upon my life."*

*"You did right, De l'Orme," replied the Count, his brow knitting into a sterner frown than I had ever seen him assume. "But if he has the insolence to present himself before me, my conduct must be very different. In addition to his attempt upon you, he is known to have been the murderer of the Count de Bagnols, and strongly suspected of having poisoned poor De Valençais. My own honour and dignity require me to have no communion with such a man, let his rank and influence be what it may. If I can meet with Bouillon, we will make such arrangements as will spare me the mortification of publicly repelling this bad man. Come with me; we will see if we can find him."*

So saying, he took his hat, which lay upon

the table, and passed into the ante-room. Several of his attendants were now in waiting, and rising, followed with me into the court, and thence into the great square before the chateau.

It was a fine sunny evening in July, one of those that seem made for loitering in the shade, with some pleasant companion, listening to dreamy fanciful talk, and drinking the balmy breath of the summer air. As our misfortune would have it, however, the first person we encountered thus employed was the Marquis de St. Brie himself, who had by this time dismounted; and, surrounded by a crowd of the most distinguished persons at Sedan, was entertaining them with that easy flowing conversation which no one knew so well how to display as himself. I could tell by the countenances of the listeners, and the smile that sat upon the lip of each, the very tone of what was passing; and I could almost fancy I heard it all—the tart jest, the pointed sneer, the amusing anecdote, the shrewd remark, the witty turn, all softened and harmonized by the language, which made the company of that infamous man so fascinating and so dangerous.

The Prince, who knew him by sight, was passing on to the other side of the square, where the Duke of Bouillon was himself in-

specting a body of infantry; but the party of gentlemen instantly advanced towards us, and one of them, coming a step forward, begged leave to make the Marquis de St. Brie known to his Highness the Count de Soissons.

"Sir!" replied the Count, tossing back the plumes of his bonnet, as if to let every one see that he did not make the least inclination to the person thus presented to him; "thank God! I know the Marquis de St. Brie thoroughly, and seek to know no more of him;" and thus speaking, he turned his back upon the Marquis, and walked forward to the Duke of Bouillon, to whom he explained in a few words his feelings in regard to the other, without however at all implicating my name in the business.

"Few people can look upon him with less respect than I do," replied the Duke of Bouillon in reply. "But he is a man of great wealth and influence; and though he is here at present with only a few servants—which I will own strikes me as singular—he promises me a reinforcement of five hundred men in three days, which may be very serviceable for the purpose of improving our victory the day after to-morrow. Your Highness must really allow me to explain away your treatment

of him, in some degree, for he is too influential a person to be lost."

The Count would hardly hear of any qualificatory measure; but, after a rather long discussion, he gave way in some degree. "Well, well," said he, "say to him what you like, but do not let him come near me, for I cannot receive him with civility."

"I will take care that he be kept away," replied the Duke. "The only difficulty will be to make him remain with us at all."

We now returned to the citadel; and the rest of the evening passed in all the bustle and activity of preparation. The service which I was to execute was again and again pointed out to me, both by the Prince and the Duke of Bouillon, the last of whom, probably to animate me to still greater exertion, gave unlimited praise to all the arrangements I had hitherto made, and expressed the utmost confidence in my co-operation with himself in the battle that was likely to take place.

Looking on my troop as perfectly secure under the command of Garcias, I remained at Sedan that night, spending the rest of my time, after I had left the Prince's, in fitting myself with the necessary defensive armour which I had not been able to procure in Paris.